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Bolivia nationalizes gas and oil industries as South America turns left

Harry der Nederlanden

President Evo Morales of Bolivia chose Mayday, on which many countries celebrate the working class, to announce the nationalization of his country's gas and oil industries. Flanked by soldiers, Morales posed in front of a large refinery operated by Petrobras while a large banner was unfurled reading: "Nationalized. Property of Bolivians." The presence of soldiers was pure political theater, as no one was resisting.

"This is the end of the looting of our natural resources by multinational oil companies," declared Morales. A government spokesman said the military was on hand to prevent any destruction of documents, but the soldiers were stationed outside.

A day earlier, Morales had met with Venezuela and Cuba to enter into a trade agreement that they called the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas.

Morales supporters have long been agitating for such drastic action. When he first came into office at the beginning of this year, Morales proceeded cautiously, announcing he would increase taxes on energy exports, but this did not satisfy his followers. They are convinced that capitalists have been plundering the wealth of their country in numerous ways. They're not entirely wrong. Past governments have been terribly corrupt, and powerful multinationals are, of course, always striving for higher profits.

Morales is following in the footsteps of President Chavez of Venezuela, who took similar action earlier. In April Chavez seized oil fields from French and Italian oil companies after they refused to turn them over to the oil company owned by the Venezuelan state. But



Ecuador and Peru have also taken action to get a larger share of the oil companies windfall profits.

Oil company executives were not immediately sure about what the "seizure" meant. Subsequently, Morales explained that he was not expelling the oil companies, but that in the future they will have to be content with smaller profits. And, according to Newshour, companies will be forced to sell at least 51 percent of their holdings to the state. So this is not a classical case of nationalization in which all properties are confiscated. Earlier Morales had talked about a 50-50 split between the oil companies and the state, but after the seizure he was saying that the state planned to take 82 percent of the profits. The oil companies have been given six months to agree to the new conditions or leave.

Next in line for similar action, announced Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linero, are the mining and forestry sectors and some of the large landholders who have failed

to develop the land.

Bolivia's poor are among the poorest in South America, living on about \$2 a day. And their lot has not improved under the regimen of privatization that was initiated by the World Bank. This has been true all across Latin America, so it is no wonder that they are searching for new solutions. The government badly needs more revenue to provide such basics as clean water and education.

Bolivia is the poorest country in South America, almost wholly dependent on income from natural resources. Although a lot of wealth has been extracted from underground, it has benefited the people, particularly the indigenous people, little or nothing. So Morales keeps stating his determination to "defend" the natural resources of his country: "It

is the land of Bolivians, especially the indigenous and original people.... The natural resources must be liberated, which means [they] must pass into the hands of the Bolivian state...."

He described the privatization that occurred a couple of decades ago as "treason."

Chavez, of course, praised Morales' move, but Brazil and Argentina, the main consumers of Bolivia's natural gas, were not as happy. Ironically, the countries most affected by the nationalization are themselves led by socialist governments. Brazil's Petrobras owns 45 percent of Bolivia's natural gas fields, and it has invested \$1.6 billion into the industry over the last decade. The Brazilians are also Bolivia's biggest customer, so they will feel the brunt of the increased costs. Besides Brazil's Petrobras, companies from Spain, France, Britain and the U.S. (Exxon) have also invested in Bolivia — a total of \$3.5 billion over the last 10 years.

In the past, such seizures have meant the curtailment of further

investment and hence further exploration and development. But with the demand for oil and gas so high, it probably isn't as risky. Brazil would have a hard time getting its natural gas elsewhere.

Three days after the seizure, Latin American leaders met in an emergency summit to discuss the implications of Bolivia's move, and they seemed to have come to some sort of understanding. Meeting a week later, the European Union warned Bolivia that its action could hurt world energy markets. Oil company executives expressed worries that the move towards nationalization might spread to Africa as well. They also expressed concern that Bolivia's oil company, through which all sales will now have to be channeled, is ill-equipped to perform that task, so that the flow of natural gas might be interrupted.

Cuba and Venezuela have announced with a lot of fanfare that they will provide aid to Bolivia. The bulk of such aid, however, has long come from the U.S. It still amounts to about \$100 million annually, far

See *Bolivia* p. 2

Thousands of Kenyans flee attacks by cattle raiders

NAIROBI (IRIN) — More than 10,000 people have fled their villages in two districts in northern Kenya following a spate of violent raids by cattle rustlers in which several people were killed and thousands of livestock stolen, according to the Kenya Red Cross Society and the police.

In April, some 9,900 people in Samburu district have sought shelter in nine locations, including churches and schools, after armed raiders attacked their homes and stole livestock.

Police said seven people were killed by the armed assailants, who raided villages in Samburu and seized 1,492 head of cattle and 1,502 goats and sheep.

Herder communities in northern and northeastern Kenya have a tradition of attacking each other's

villages to steal livestock, but the raids have become increasingly violent as herdsman illegally acquire firearms, readily available in the area. Kenyan authorities blame insecurity in the northern and northeastern districts on guns smuggled from neighboring Somalia, which has had no functional government since 1991.

The districts hit by cattle raids have been experiencing severe drought, during which pastoralists have lost thousands of livestock due to lack of water and pasture. The raids are happening at the beginning of the rainy season. "It [rustling] seems to be a way of restocking by communities which lost their livelihoods during the drought," said Farid Abdulkadir, head of the Red Cross.

News

Drought threatens lifestyle of Kenya's nomads

NAIROBI (IRIN)—Around the few deep boreholes dotted across Kenya's arid empty north, villages of thatched huts are growing by the day. Dozens of families arrive, leading camel trains and herding the few bony cattle they have left, pushed by drought to the vast frontier bordering Somalia and Ethiopia.

Tribal lore passed down the generations says the only way for these nomads to survive is to keep moving, from watering hole to river, from one pasture to the next, living off the milk and meat of their livestock. But today, there is no pasture, and two years without rain have erased the watering holes and turned rivers to sand, killing animals in the thousands. Now, these wanderers are being forced to settle near the only permanent water sources available, where the precious resource is drawn from deep wells by diesel-driven boreholes and where more and more people struggle to share a dwindling supply.

"We came here 17 years ago when there was another bad time, when we lost all our animals and were left with nothing," said Jimale Bule, 72, chairman of the council of elders at Alimaow village, three miles outside Wajir, a Kenyan provincial capital 400 miles north of Nairobi. "Now we are still struggling, yet there are more and more people who are coming from the bush to live here. We cannot all live together, there are too many."

Worst of the worst

Settling down is not what nomads do. They are battle-hardened to deal with dry spells and even occasional drought, roaming vast distances where average rainfall is just 300 mm a year. But this drought has persisted for two years in Kenya, and four rainy seasons have passed with less than 20 mm falling, according to the country's meteorological department.

"This is the worst period of the worst drought we have ever seen here, and we are so worried we will not live to see the

rains come with any of our animals still alive," said Abdikadr Amin, 50, at the remote borehole at Arbajahan, 60 miles north of Wajir. He had already lost 130 of his 150 cows.

Thousands of cows and sheep have already died across Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia and those still struggling on are on the brink of starvation. Herdsmen are resorting to sharing their last food and water with their animals — even feeding them black tea in the hope they will last until rain replenishes pasture and water holes.

In Ethiopia's southern belt bordering Kenya, the situation is the same, as it is in Somalia's southwest as well. Indeed, it is wrong to think of this vast dry region as belonging to three different nations — to the groups who live here, political borders mean little. When prolonged dry spells hit, pastoralists employ distress strategies. They move to whatever water there is, even if it is four days and 120 km away. To save their breeding stock and milk animals, they intentionally abort animal fetuses or slaughter calves at birth. Families sell their scant valuable assets — jewellery, a bicycle, spare clothing, a bucket — or pull their children out of school to save fees. Trees struggling to survive the drought are chopped down for firewood, and the limited water found each day is shared between livestock and families.

This time, however, they have run out of ideas. Having exhausted every coping mechanism, they trudged to feeding centres and water distribution points, a proud people forced to look for hand-outs.

The fate of pastoralism

The current situation begs the question of whether nomadic pastoralism can survive in an environment burdened by overpopulation — of both humans and livestock. Perhaps roaming communities can be taught to plough and plant, using drought-resistant seeds watered by more boreholes, coaxing rotating harvests of maize, sorghum, beans, cabbage and peas from irrigated terraces fed by water stored up to last through harsh times.

It has worked in Lokubae and Morulem, two small villages in Lokori district, 700 km north of Nairobi, where World Vision began teaching agricultural techniques and water conservation principles a decade ago. Despite fierce early resistance from elders



Pastoralists are turning their backs on centuries of nomadic lifestyle and instead settling near permanent water as recurrent drought again decimates their animals. This caravan was trekking to water 45 miles away.

of the Turkana community who live there, the scheme, supported by the United Nations World Food Program, has flourished to the point where the Turkana last month donated 6.5 metric tons of their excess grains to other Kenyans struggling with the drought.

"Achieving a level of food security that allows them to donate food to others is amazing," said Timothy Andrews, Kenya country director for World Vision, adding that plans had been drawn up to replicate the program in other places.

Such attempts to switch lifestyles are met with angry disdain elsewhere, however.

Only massive investment by Kenya's government to give herdsmen access to slaughter houses, freezing plants and good roads to market will pull them off the poverty line and allow them to survive lean times like the current drought, which has killed more than half of their animals, says District Pastoralist's Association board member Mohamed Abdi Elmi, at Arbajahan village.

No alternative

"Pastoralism is not an experiment," snarled Mohamed Abdi Elmi, a board member of the District Pastoralist Association in Wajir, a town that is arguably the epicentre of Kenya's drought crisis. "It has been here for centuries, and we believe it is here to stay no matter what the development planners say. It is the only way to make use of these arid lands. Farming crops is impossible on a large scale."

Equally, the large-scale settlement of people carries with it inherent problems in this land of little, where conflict over scant resources regularly turns violent and fatal. Drilling more boreholes to sustain greater populations in booming villages or towns drains sub-surface water, which the natural

environment can scarcely spare. Diesel to run them costs money and pollutes. Schools are few and often costly. Health infrastructure is weak, and disease outbreaks that occur when too many people live too close together are difficult to contain.

"There really is no alternative to pastoralism," said Daniele Donati, emergency coordinator for Africa for the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Changing times, changing minds

If nomadic communities are to survive, they must adapt their practices to the increased incidence of drought. Pastoralists who have too many animals need to be sensitized to cutting herd sizes, voluntarily and selectively, so the best breeding animals are nurtured and vets have access to immunize them against virulent diseases. Tracts of pasture, plentiful in good seasons, need to be left untouched so that when drought recurs, as it inevitably will, there is food to spare. Existing boreholes must be well maintained and spares procured quickly. The wanton chopping down of trees for firewood must be curbed by introducing alternatives, like "charcoal" made from sustainable forests, more efficient cooking stoves and electric power where feasible.

The key to the success — rather than simply the subsistence — of pastoralism in the modern world is for governments to approach nomadic communities as potential contributors to a nation's economic wealth. With a slaughterhouse, reliable electricity to power a freezing plant, and roads that are passable year-round, there is no reason why pastoralists should not be able to earn well from national and even international markets.

Bolivia . . . continued from p. 1

more than from any other country, reports the *Herald Tribune*. "In addition to paying for major infrastructure projects like roads and pushing international lenders to forgive Bolivia's debt..., it has helped Bolivians in more direct ways, too, building clinics and helping small businesses." It helps pay for 27 clinics across the country staffed by nearly 1,000 doctors and other health professionals.

Most Bolivians, however, seem to be completely unaware of such aid. All they seem to be aware of is the U.S. pressure to eradicate coca growing as part of the war on drugs. And this has deeply angered the indigenous people, because coca is part of their culture and their livelihood. That anger helped to fuel Morales political campaign, for he championed the cause of the coca farmers.

MAY 29, 2006

News

Newest hot spot for oil production

Fred Langan

FORT MCMURRAY, ALBERTA – More expensive to process than the light crude oil of the Middle East, Alberta's oil sands have long remained a largely untapped resource. But with oil at \$70 a barrel, it has become economically feasible to extract the thick, sticky bitumen that in former years was used to seal native people's canoes – not fuel a global economy.

Only Saudi Arabia, with 259 billion barrels, has larger oil reserves than the Florida-sized patch that surrounds this Canadian outpost. And a pipeline already exists to carry the oil to a key market: the United States.

Over the next five years, oil companies from Exxon Mobil to France's Total are expected to invest C\$60 billion in oil sands. Earlier this week, Shell Canada announced a takeover of Canadian oil-sands producer BlackRock Ventures, valued at \$2.4 billion Canadian (\$2.17 billion).

Production in Alberta is up 61 percent over the past four years. This year, Alberta's oil sands are expected to produce 1.2 million barrels a day, roughly equal to the production of Texas.

"The oil sands ... represent a turning point in the history of energy, and a switch to synthetic [chemically processed] sources of oil," says Peter Tertzakian, chief energy economist at the Calgary-based energy consultancy ARC Financial.

Industry experts say new technology could greatly increase output, providing a significant source of secure oil for the United States. Just last month, a pipeline built to carry oil north from the Gulf of Mexico to Midwest refineries, reversed direction to take Alberta oil south.

"We can double our production and go for another 45 years," says Jim Carter, president of Syncrude Canada Ltd., the world's largest oil sands operator. "There is relatively new technology that could expand production, but there is still a lot to be mined by surface methods."

From natural resource to final product

Huge swaths of the boreal forest cover Alberta's deposits, concentrated in three locations: Peace River to the west of Fort McMurray; Cold Lake to the southeast, on the Saskatchewan border; and – by far the largest – the Athabasca region surrounding Fort McMurray, the town at the center of oil sands production.

Syncrude – a joint venture of seven firms – estimates that those deposits contain 175 billion recoverable barrels of oil.

Optimists such as the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board say the reserves could be 10 times that if new technology succeeds in separating the oil from the sand in hard-to-reach underground deposits.

Syncrude and other companies, from Shell to Suncor, are stripping away the top layer of the earth to get at the bitumen that contains oil. They use giant shovels that scoop up 80 to 90 tons at a time, dropping the earth into the giant yellow Caterpillar 797B, the largest truck in the world. It is as tall as a two-story house and its tires cost \$60,000 each. It never leaves the property; its weight would wreck the local roads.

Each 400-ton load will produce 200 barrels of oil once it's been put through the crusher. Other sites in Alberta use more complex methods of getting at the bitumen that is too deep to mine. High-temperature steam is pumped down into the oil sands deposits to liquefy the bitumen,

which is then pumped to the surface.

However it's extracted, all bitumen has to be transformed into oil in a process called upgrading. There are several different steps in upgrading, all of them using a lot of energy, usually natural gas. It costs \$23 to \$26 a barrel – depending on the project – to produce light oil from sticky goo of the oil sands.

With oil at current prices, the shares of firms such as Canadian Natural Resources and Suncor have been soaring on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Some investment analysts warn there could be problems for the oil-sands operators, since their costs – natural gas to "cook" the bitumen during the refining process and diesel fuel to run their equipment – are rising.

Environmental concerns

Environmentalists, meanwhile, are concerned about the effects of oil-sands production, though oil sands firms say they will return it to pristine condition in the long run.

"With projections that oil-sands production will grow from 1 million to more than 5 million barrels per day over the next 25 years, the air, land, and water of Alberta's northeastern boreal forest is at risk of severe environmental degradation," said the Pembina Institute, an Alberta-based environmental organization, in a statement on its website.

The giant smokestacks at the refineries send black smoke into the air that stretches for miles in the clear blue sky above the forest.

"The proposed tar-sands developments will tear a hole in Canada's lungs – our vital boreal forest ecosystem," said Lindsay Telfer of Canada's Sierra Club.

And a native group that lives just north of the project has said it isn't safe to fish in the Athabasca River, due to pollution from not just the oil sands but also paper mills.

No gold-rush exodus ... yet

But the oil-sands operators and local government leaders are focused on another problem: labor shortages.

"Our biggest problem is finding housing for the people who are coming here," says Melissa Blake, mayor of Fort McMurray.

On average, 100 people a week arrive in this town of 61,000 looking for work.

There is also a transient population of as many as 12,000 that commutes to work from other parts of Canada, staying in rented space for weeks on end.

Workers are so hard to come by that unskilled people in fast-food restaurants are paid \$14 an hour, double the minimum wage.

The Fort McKay Group, run by an Indian tribe, pays trained cooks in its catering service as much as \$40 an hour.

The average cost of a small house – 1,200 square feet – in Fort McMurray is \$418,000 – more expensive than most big cities.

Rents for small apartments can be \$1,000 a month. "The price of oil drives growth in Fort McMurray. And at these prices we expect our [permanent] population to grow to 100,000 by 2012," says Mayor Blake.



Fred Langan is a Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

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Editorial

Gnosticism and the desire for order

Harry der Nederlanden

Assembling and writing every issue of *CC* is a bit of an adventure every time. There's suspense because you're never sure if every writer that you're counting on is going to come through as promised, and each time you wonder whether you yourself will be able to get your own part done in time. It's also a process of learning and discovery, for much of what appears on these pages is new to me as well as to the readers. Dozens of articles are gathered from several newspapers and magazines, reams of paper pile up on my desk, and slowly a few things begin to take shape.

When the next *CC* appears at our door, all printed and ready for mailing, each time it strikes me as a minor miracle. Two weeks earlier, there was nothing, and – wonder of wonders – here it is all finished. Admittedly, this isn't the way most magazines function; most plan several issues ahead, lining up themes and writers, and assigning stories. The content of the news cannot, of course, be planned very far ahead unless you can see into the future.

But when I put a period at the end of this issue's editorial, suddenly I am staring at 24 blank pages for the next issue – 24 terrifying blank pages. *CC* simply doesn't have the staff and the time to devote to long-term planning. Producing this present issue consumes all our time and energy. Each time again it's a daunting thought: how are we going to fill up these blank pages?

But then I remind myself that anniversaries, birthdays, obituaries and other announcements will soon arrive which Rose will arrange on her pages, that there will be several pages of ads and job openings which will fill the pages Ineke oversees, that there are several columnists whom I can count on for interesting thoughts and stories, and slowly my heartbeat gets back to normal and the terror begins to ebb.

From past experience, I've learned that a couple of days before the paper is due to be sent off to the printer, I'll be asking, "How are we going to fit this piece in? Are we already out of space?"

Everyone's job or business or mission has this blend of uncertainty and order. A certain amount of unpredictableness makes for freedom and excitement. We look forward to new things. But on the other hand if we couldn't count on any regularity – if the internet would shut down, if the columnists all went fishing, if our printer went out of business, if the mailing machine broke down – that would

no longer be an adventure but a nightmare.

However, complete predictability, order, certainty and control would mean the absence of all freedom, excitement and life. Without a certain degree of openness and uncertainty, life would become mere drudgery and routine. We would be like cogs in a machine.

Of course, people vary tremendously in terms of how much order they like in their lives. Some of us like to have things in their proper place and our day neatly scheduled. Others thrive on a greater degree of chaos and like the feeling of flying by the seat of their pants. Some get up tight when things don't go quite as planned, and some get up tight when things are too planned and controlled. But none of us could function without some degree of order, and life would not be life without the new and unpredictable.

Like it or not, I'm expected to be in the office here for certain hours every day. Like it or not, if I want the paper published I have to send all the copy to the printer by a certain deadline. My wife expects me to be home at certain times. If I want to worship with other members of my congregation I have to be at church at a specified time on Sunday. In modern society, our lives are criss-crossed by numerous expectations and schedules that we cannot rearrange at our own whim. Even our bodies have certain rhythms, and if we want to be healthy we heed them. We go to bed at regular times and eat at regular times.

There are times when we all stand back and look at how much of our lives are programmed by such schedules. We wonder how we got caught up in such a hectic rat race. In the 70's some writers and thinkers made much of this and liked to mock the emptiness and mechanicalness of middle-class life in the suburbs. One of the films of the time, *The Stepford Wives*, based on a 1972 novel, suggested that if we hold people to a certain ideal of perfection, they could just as well be replaced by robots. The Stepford wives are a sort of reverse image of the passion- and impulse-driven *Desperate Housewives* popular on television today.

Gnosticism and the appeal of *The Da Vinci Code* come out of a similar experience, I think. The ancient gnostics looked around at the way life, society and reality was ordered, and not liking what they saw, they concluded that it was void of meaning. To keep living life according to those rhythms that everyone else considered normal, they said, was nuts. They withdrew into their own communities where they created their own daily regimen designed to wean their spirits from dependence on the lower, material levels of human existence.

The rhythms and the conditions imposed on human life, they reasoned, were so far from what they considered ideal, so different from the kind of spiritual existence that humans are destined for, that the God who created the material world must have been a malicious foe, not a deity favorably inclined toward mankind. In other words, this creation fell so far short of what it ought to be, that they judged the Creator to be either mad or malicious. So the One who rescues and redeems us from this perverted order must be a Power completely opposite to the one who made it.

Not all those categorized as gnostics developed such a sharply dualistic world view with two almost diametrically opposed deities, but it is a common enough thread that philosophers like Hans Jonas and Eric Voegelin took it to be the defining core. Both thinkers actually developed their idea of gnosticism before many of the most recent discoveries became known, but I think they captured its essence.

When it is thus reduced to its essential elements, gnosticism is not just an ancient religion that arose and died out in the first few centuries Anno Domini. It is a perennial temptation that hovers at the edges of all religion and all

idealism. It has become almost commonplace, for example, to charge that certain forms of American evangelicalism are gnostic or that they have gnostic tendencies.

Dispensationalism of the "Left Behind" sort tends to picture redemption as a drama in which God is at last so disgusted with the world and with creation that he allows it to be completely destroyed by fire. We don't need to be concerned with saving the material parts of this world; it will all be consumed by fire anyway. We must be concerned with saving souls. This is in most cases a caricature even of the dispensationalists, for most don't see the fire so much in terms of a destruction of creation as a purification of it. But it does have some truth.

However, some of those who charge dispensationalism with being gnostic display gnostic tendencies of their own. Those who condemn evangelicals for their contempt for creation often betray a contempt for history and tradition. In today's universities in almost every department it is common to portray history as by its very nature repressive and violent. The so-called order and reason of the Western tradition is nothing but the triumph of capitalism, patriarchy, racism, ethnocentrism, scientism and so on. It's one long and vast conspiracy against what is best in humanity.

It is this mindset that Eric Voegelin sees as the defining trait of gnosticism. From this perspective, Marxism and every ideology that so totally rejects the present order of things that it would uproot and destroy it all by violence if necessary is driven by that same gnostic vision. It refuses to see any good, whether in nature or in history or in society, but sees it all as fundamentally perverse and violent. To make over the world as it ought to be, all that is has to be cut down root and branch, cast into the fire and rebuilt from the ground up. And we're the ones to do it. Look, here's our blueprint for the New World.

No, there are few utopians anymore. The day of grand visions and grand narratives of world transformation belong to the modernity that is past. We are part of post-modernity. But post-modernity has not done away with those sweeping narratives of total judgment.

One of the most influential interpreters of the philosopher Hegel, from whom Marx derived his grand narrative of history as a final judgment by revolution, was Alexandre Kojève. He argued that the overall conclusion to which Western philosophy leads us is this: that we must become gods. It is we ourselves, not some god, not natural law, not tradition, not some transcendental reason or order beyond us – it is we who must take charge of and shape our own destiny. We are the authors of history and of order. We are the authors of our fate.

What is wrong with all history up to the present is that we have seen it as part of a natural or divine order over which we have no control, and it is the kings and priests and ruling classes who have conspired to convince us of this so they could control us.

Once we swallow this view of history, we have in effect accepted history as a conspiracy against what is divine in us. We survey history and all the forms of order in this world with our godlike reason and judge it to be a mad, demonic order. It is not order; it is a form of violence.

That's the basic plot of *The Da Vinci Code*. But in far more subtle and complex ways, it's the story that is told again and again from various perspectives in our schools and universities.

And it is against this godlike judgmental attitude that the reflections of Van Ruler on Ecclesiastes are a good antidote. We must never stop trusting and believing and searching for the hand of our sovereign Lord in the particulars of things and events and in the face of our neighbor. And we must wait on the Lord, deferring to him to make the final judgment on what is evil.

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Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to:
report on significant events in the Christian community
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rooted in a Reformed perspective;
provide contact for the Christian community.

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Tel: (905) 682-8313; 1-800-969-4838

Fax: (905) 682-8313; Web site: www.christiancourier.ca

Publications Mail Registration No. 09375

We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada,
through the Publications Assistance Program
(PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Canada

MAY 29, 2006

Letters

Letter to Jeanette: Why is Canada in Afghanistan?

Hi grampa,

We are researching the war in Afghanistan, and I don't understand why Canada is involved. Can you try to put it into kid language because I know you know a lot about all that stuff.

JEANETTE

Dear Jeannette,

Of course, I'll give it a try, and I will keep it short. Let me put it this way:

In this free country of Canada, you are able to enjoy all of the following things and much more, but I will only list what I think are the top ten good things that were forbidden under the Taliban government of Afghanistan, the regime that was defeated in 2001 and is now trying to get its power back.

1. You do not have to fear that your Dad or Mom will be dragged away from your home because the police has received instruction from higher authorities that they must be jailed or even killed because they have said something bad about the government.

2. You are able to attend church without any worry that the police might come into your church service, beat up people and burn the church down. (In fact, in Afghanistan the regime that was overthrown in 2001 did not even allow churches to be built, or any one to have and read the Bible.)

3. You are able to get an education to whatever level of learning you are able and willing to go, though you are a girl. That would be impossible under the regime that was overthrown in 2001.

4. You are able to go to a public library and borrow and read any book that is in the system.

5. No one will force you to become a Christian or adherent of any other religion.

6. You are able to walk about freely without being accompanied by a male person, and you are not forced to wear a cumbersome tent-like cover (a burka) that covers your entire body and only leaves a small slot for your eyes.

7. No one forces you to be a virtual house slave with very little opportunity to spend time out of doors.

8. When 16, you will be able to obtain a driver's licence and travel freely by car, something you would never be able to do under a Taliban-type government.

9. You are free to marry someone you love, and you will not be married off at your current age to some old guy who would treat you like dirt. In Afghanistan under the Taliban your husband would be able to divorce you any time (you could not divorce him) and beat you if you did not please him. (You can check that in the Koran, 4:34, which reads in part: "Men are the maintainers of women...[and are to] admonish them [their wives], and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great." – *The Qur'an* Translation, by M.H. Shakir.)

10. You are not forced to recite the Koran and be taught by religious leaders to hate those who are not Muslims, especially Jews and Christians, and you are not forced to pray and work for the day when the whole world will be controlled by Islamic law as taught in the Koran. You are not taught that suicide terrorists are heroes.

Conclusion. None of these things (at least not directly) would have led to our soldiers going to Afghanistan to help them build a society freed from the inhuman control of religious fanatics. There is another reason why a number of western countries, led by the military power of the United States, invaded Afghanistan and destroyed the Taliban.

It is the following: the fact that Afghanistan had become a rallying point and training ground of terrorists who were trained to do what the terrorists did on September 11, 2001, when they killed about 3,000 defenceless people. These terrorists had singled out America as the great evil that must be destroyed, but they had also already killed and destroyed in many other parts of the world. So, you might say that the destruction of the Taliban was a defensive measure to protect the free, non-Muslim world against the kind of attack suffered by New York and Washington on 9/11.

Now many people disagree and think that it was wrong to go to war against Afghanistan. We must live with that disagreement, but everyone should at least face the reality about the awfulness of what the Taliban were doing and openly proclaimed to continue to do. The most important leader of the Islamic-inspired terrorism who organized and trained his people in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, is no longer able to use that base, and in the process the Afghan people have an opportunity to build a society of freedom and dignity for all people. To help them do that is the reason our Canadian soldiers are in Afghanistan, and some of them have lost their lives in doing that.

I hope I have been clear enough, but if you have more questions, just let me know. Though I would tell you not to get too much involved in this sort of issue, for it is not so easy. Enjoy the good things we have here and pray that other people also may enjoy them.

Love,
Grandpa
[Harry Antonides]

Who destroys body and soul?

I learned a lot from Bert Witvoet while he and I were long-time colleagues at C.C. I like to think he occasionally also learned something from me – and that he still might! While I appreciated the reminder in his last column that we must value our bodies as good creations of God ("When a body meet a body," May 15), I feel I have to point out a rare but important misinterpretation of Scripture on Bert's part in that column.

He quoted Matthew 10:28. Jesus is in the midst of instructing the Twelve before sending them out to heal illnesses and cast out evil spirits, and says: *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell* (NIV).

Bert interprets that "One" as Satan. This made my eyebrows raise because I quoted this verse myself in my March column about the Judgment (and about *fearing* God). I assumed that the only "One" who has the power and authority to destroy both soul and body in hell is God. That is how I've always read that verse, and that is the NIV Study Bible's interpretation. Upon some biblical sleuthing after reading Bert's column I discovered that all other translations I checked interpret this text as the NIV does. While I'm not generally a fan of Bible paraphrases, in this instance Eugene Peterson's *The Message* gets the message across very well: *Don't be bluffed into silence by the threats of bullies. There's nothing they can do to your soul, your core being. Save your fear for God, who holds your entire life – body and soul – in his hands.*

While we need to *beware* Satan (as the Apostle Peter says), we need not *fear* him.

However, as the writer to the Hebrews says (10:26, 31), for those who deliberately keep on sinning after having received the knowledge of the truth, "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" – because it is *he* alone who determines our final destiny.

Marian Van Til
Youngstown, NY



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(ISSN 1192-3415) Published biweekly on Mondays.

Address all correspondence to: 1 Hiscott St, St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
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PRINTED IN CANADA



The academy

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman



Spirituality beyond yourself

There was a time – when books like *The Secular City* (1965) were being chatted about – that many academics assumed that it was just a matter of time before religion joined the dinosaurs as an extinct species. They held to a linear view of history in which social evolution (or “progress”) through science and technology would soon completely eclipse religious faith, and a friendly naturalism – and a natural friendliness – would rule the land. “Imagine there’s no heaven, it’s easy if you try,” sang John Lennon.

Well, it really wasn’t that easy for most of the globe. Faith in science as the sole authority on meaning and purpose fosters a disenchantment that few can truly embrace. In fact, a recent UCLA survey of over 100,000 students from over 200 different universities and colleges indicates that 80 percent of students “have an interest in spirituality” and “believe in the sacredness of life.” Fifty percent say that it is “essential” or “very important” that their institution of learning encourage their personal expression of spirituality. Students long for spiritual nurture, and more deeply, for a spiritual home.

Faith is not disappearing with the hula-hoop or even X-box 1, and some universities are responding to these yearnings and commitments. Spirituality has fanned out wide in all kinds of ways. Yet there is one thing about discussions of “spirituality” that is sadly narrow, and that is this: the assumption that spirituality is only a private, personal matter. It need not be tied to anything greater than your preferences, your needs, or your wounds and it best not mix with politics or the economy, not to mention the university curriculum.

Design your own religion

A young woman walked into the office of a Christian Reformed campus minister, and asked for help. She said that she had decided to develop her own spirituality, and she wanted his help in the process. While her quest was genuine, her method ultimately defeats itself. How can you get in touch with a higher power if you are the centre of the process? G. K. Chesterton said “a man can no more possess a private religion than he can possess a private sun or moon.”

In a different way, and perhaps to a different degree, we are like that young woman. We are consumers today, and we all want to design our own religion, shop for the right church for us, with the right songs, and even design our own Jesus (NDP radical, conservative family man, etc). Albert Schweitzer once said that people who try to reconstruct the “real” Jesus are like a man looking down into a well. He inevitably sees little more than his own face reflecting back at him. The myth of the handsome Narcissus may also fit here – a young man so fascinated by his own reflection in a pool that he wastes away pining after himself.

How do we get “outside” of our own preferences and biases? By the grace of God, we can broaden our view, and perhaps even transcend it. This may come in many ways, one of which is being deeply rooted in a long-standing community of faith.

One deep well

I used to subscribe to a magazine called *UTNE* reader, sub-titled “the best of the alternative media.” This is a magazine that is submerged in the contemporary spirituality of which we speak. One issue asked different religious teachers about the idea of “designer spiritualities” and what follows are some of the responses they received.

Zen Master John Daido Looi Roshi says such spiritualities can be “self-deluding rather than nourishing and healing ... a reflection of a culture of greediness and consumerism ... [where] we entertain ourselves with teachings that were meant to transform our lives.”

Similarly, Cistercian monk Father Thomas Keating says that with such collage forming you “run the risk of digging too many wells in the desert,” instead of one well, deep and sure. “It may be best to postpone the immediate gratification of experimentation and invest in a long-range program ... a tree without deep roots can be blown over by the wind.”

Finally, Yoga Master Sri Swami Satchidananda advises against “trying to walk on all the different paths at once ... integrate [what you have]... into one unified and harmonious path ... and follow that spiritual path with your goal in mind and stay with it consistently. Delve deep into your practices with consistency and earnestness and you will certainly reap all the spiritual benefits.”

Bearing witness to the gospel need not disparage other religions. We can learn significant things from each other. Still, we can winsomely invite our neighbors to choose this one path, for good. The Christian faith is an ancient path that follows the words and life of Jesus Christ, the Jewish Rabbi of Nazareth. It is a spirituality that consists of disciplines like prayer, fasting, giving, and community living that have been handed down through the centuries. It is a spirituality that takes you beyond yourself. As Eugene Peterson said, “One way to define spiritual life is getting so tired and fed up with yourself you go on to something better, which is following Jesus.” And that, inevitably, is about learning how to die.

Peter Schuurman is the
Christian Reformed Education
Mission Leader and resides in
Guelph, Ontario.



Farel Seminary moves

“What do I desire, but that His light might blaze!”

These noble words were the personal motto of the 16th century French reformer, William Farel, the website of Farel Reformed Theological Seminary tells us. Most of us know him only as the French-speaking pastor who challenged John Calvin to stay in Geneva, the city forever associated with his name.

But in Quebec, the name of Farel is attached to the Reformed seminary. It has recently received accreditation from the Association of Reformed Theological Schools and is changing its location. Formerly located in Laval, where it found itself too far removed from downtown, the seminary decided to move back to downtown Montreal.

About three years after the school was founded in 1979, 25 years ago, CRC Synod, at the request of the Reformed Evangelical Alliance, helped launch Farel as a Training school for Francophone pastors and lay leaders in Quebec City, appointing Martin D. Geleynse to teach there. Although the CRC dropped its support several years later, the seminary has survived and flourished. The school is now supported by the Canadian Reformed Church and its sister church in Holland as well as by the Reformed Seminary in Aix-en-Provence, France and the PCA in the USA.

According to the Farel website, only 0.5 percent of Quebec’s population is evangelical Christian, and 0.02 percent of that number is Reformed, making French-speaking Canada one of the most under-evangelized areas in the world!

In 1986 Rev. Jean-Guy deBlois, then president of L’Alliance Réformée Evangélique, was named Secretary General of the Institute and remains its part-time Director. Many students have been trained at Farel through part-time and full-time studies including some who serve as pastors in Québec and other French-speaking countries in the world.

Guillaume Farel



Stewardship

Churches call for a European peace agency

The role of the political institutions and the role of the churches on issues relating to Peace, Security and Reconciliation was the main theme taken up by the 40 church representatives from 18 European countries, who attended the plenary meeting of the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in Sigtuna, Sweden, from April 29 to May 3, 2006.

Ambassador Alyson J.K. Bailes from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), addressing the meeting with a keynote speech, emphasized the importance of regional cooperation across national borders as an important mechanism for conflict prevention, non-violent conflict management and peacekeeping. The meeting regarded increased regional cooperation as a challenge for the political institutions and, equally, for the churches themselves.

In particular, the European Union, with its various political and economic possibilities to promote peace and security, was seen as an increasingly important actor carrying a major responsibility. The EU is to be seen as a quite successful peace project in itself. The churches will continue to critically monitor the developments towards a more coherent Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in the Union. Churches emphasize the need for an effective early warning and conflict prevention system as well as non-violent means of conflict management and peacekeeping.

Following up on earlier interventions of churches, for instance, in relation to the EU's European Security Strategy (adopted in December 2003) and the Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, the Church and Society Commission urges the European Union and its Member States to strengthen the Union's capacity in the area of non-military means of conflict management. It also calls for the establishment of a European Peace Agency in order to enhance additional research and an active engagement in conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

Peter Brune, Director of the church-related Life and Peace Institute in Uppsala, challenged the audience to recognize the expertise within churches to engage in conflict prevention and non-violent conflict mediation. But he also stated, "As churches we need to increase our competence on peace and conflict." In particular, he urged churches to become more involved in reflections and discussions about security issues. "What is the churches' understanding of security and which consequences derive out of that?" He asked.

In an age where religion is often misused or portrayed as fuelling conflicts, the Church and Society Commission committed itself to enhance its work in relation to peace, security and reconciliation; in relation to the European institutions on the one hand and in supporting a strengthened witness of the churches on the other. The main emphasis of the Church and Society Commission work program in this field will be to reflect on the relationship of security and vulnerability from a faith perspective, to promote conflict prevention and non-violent forms of conflict management in relation to the European Institutions, and to support existing (church-related) networks in their efforts to capacity building and promoting a regional approach.

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is a fellowship of some 125 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, plus 40 associated organizations. CEC was founded in 1959. It has offices in Geneva, Brussels and Strasbourg.

Big picture stewardship 1

Consumer spending in Canada

According to Statistics Canada, in 2004 the number of households in Canada was estimated to be 11.9 million. The average expenditure per household was \$63,636, of which \$12,902 went for income taxes (about 20 percent). Excluding income tax, personal insurance and pension contributions and giving, the average family had \$45,436 available for its own use. What does the average Canadian family do with this money? Where does it go? Here's a rough breakdown from the data provided by Statistics Canada (CANSIM table 203-0001). I've grouped some of the expenditures and calculated the percentages, and then listed them in descending order:

Expenditure	\$	%
Shelter Cost	16990	26.7
Personal income tax	12902	20.3
transportation	8626	13.6
food & health costs	8600	13.5
recreation	3678	5.8
Personal ins/pension	3645	5.7
personal care	897	1.4
clothing	2506	3.9
gifts of money/contributions	1652	2.6
Tobacco/alcohol	1495	2.3
Education & reading material	1361	2.1
Miscellaneous	1020	1.6
Games of chance	264	0.4
Total	63636	

From an overall perspective, if we exclude the income tax (which also benefits us through government services) and the miscellaneous categories, then more than 75 percent of an average household's income is spent on the family members themselves. Only \$1,600 per household or 2.6 percent of income is spent on giving. That is less than half of what is spent on recreation alone, and 29 times less than that spent on themselves! When compared to the biblical standard of the tithe, this works out to less than a quarter of that. We are not a very generous nation when it comes to our giving.

Perhaps it's because of our cold northern climate that we spend the largest part of our money on our homes – 26.7 percent (including utilities/furnishings). We spend half as much again for transportation – 13.6 percent. And shelter, food and health expenditures together eat up over half the average family budget: \$34,216. Can the world afford us?

A child born in a wealthy country is likely to consume, waste, and pollute more in his or her lifetime than fifty children born in developing nations.

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

Our energy-burning lifestyles are pushing our planet to the point of no return. It is dawning on us at last that the life of our world is as vulnerable as the children we raise.

George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, UK

Reading this, we realize that we have taken the biggest piece of the pie. How do we respond? We do have choices. We can choose to spend less on ourselves. We can make more sober choices, and do our part to make do with less. Consider our vices: tobacco, alcohol and games of chance are obvious. If we just took the money spent on them and added that to what we give, that would double our aid. We have other extravagances and excesses too – in recreation, sport, expensive or energy extravagant hobbies, luxuries.

Big-ticket items are also the ones where we can make the most impact. In 2005 new vehicle purchases, Canadians chose to buy a new SUV or a truck more than 48 percent of the time, and in Alberta 66 percent of the time. Is this really necessary?

What's the point? In the face of the increasing need for a Christian response to hunger, physical and spiritual, and injustice, Jesus reminds that we need to be thinking of the poor by being more careful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us. It was Jesus who said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matt. 25:40

Stewardly tip: Take charge. Take steps to reduce your consumption and increase your giving. It's not only environmentally friendly but it's the way to be a better steward of all the resources God has entrusted to your care. Have a family pow-wow to come up with ways to reuse, reduce, recycle and work together to so you can free-a-family with CRWRC or provide a child sponsorship with World Vision.

Readers: Share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Big picture stewardship 2

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario. Rick's email: rickd@cssservices.ca




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Church

Three churches attacked in Sri Lanka

Sarah Page

DUBLIN (Compass Direct) — Unruly mobs have attacked three churches over the past fortnight, in one incident setting car tires on fire in front of a Methodist church to prevent people from entering for Sunday worship.

On Saturday, May 6, a Buddhist monk led a mob to a site where members of the United Christian Fellowship in Poddala, Galle district, had begun building a community hall on land they had purchased in the village. The monk threatened the pastor and a construction worker; one man grabbed the construction worker by the collar and assaulted him.

The mob said they would set fire to the building if construction continued, despite the pastor informing them that it was a community hall, not a church.

Church staff reported the incident to police. Construction is on hold due to fears of another attack.

Methodist Church attacked

Buddhist monks led a second mob to attack a Methodist church in Piliyandala, southeast of Colombo, on April 30. The church was previously attacked on April 23; protest rallies were also held outside the church on April 9 and 16.

"On April 30, the Buddhist monks and their people did not allow us to have the service," a local source told Compass. "They came early in the morning and gathered around the church, not allowing any of us to go in."

The mob set car tires on fire on the road outside the church as a scare tactic to keep people away from the building. When church members phoned the police, about 30 policemen arrived but said they could do nothing until they received instructions from their superintendent.

"The superintendent had a quick meeting with us and said if we really wanted to hold the service, he would order the police to give us protection," the source continued. "But if they came against us, the police might have to take violent action."

Church members were advised to make an official complaint, noting that the police had advised them not to hold the service in the interests of maintaining peace. The police then arrested 10 people in the crowd and remanded them on a bail fee of 25,000 Sri Lankan rupees (US\$243) per person. The police felt the bail fee might act as a deterrent against further attacks.

Church leaders have since contacted Buddhist leaders and hope to set up negotiation meetings with the senior monk in the village.

Threats issued

An Assembly of God church in Piliyandala is also facing intense opposition. Villagers launched a poster campaign in April, threatening mass protests if the church does not close down.

On April 9, a small crowd of 24 people gathered outside the church and chanted Buddhist prayers.

Church leaders alerted police, who arrived at the scene and granted permission for a short peaceful protest under supervision.

According to the National Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka, this same church was bombed and completely burned to the ground on September 25, 2003. When the church was rebuilt, villagers took church members to court in 2004 with the aim of closing it down. The court, however, ruled that Christians had a legal right to gather for worship.

Anti-conversion bill

Violent mobs have carried out at least 160 attacks on churches or Christian institutions since 2002, when Buddhist monks first launched their campaign to introduce anti-conversion legislation.

A 19-member committee appointed by the Sri Lankan Parliament is still reviewing a bill that would outlaw "forcible" conversion.

The Buddhist Jathika Hela Urumaya (National Heritage Party) first introduced its draft Bill on Prohibition of Forcible Conversion to Parliament in July 2004 as an attempt to halt conversions from Buddhism to Christianity. The bill called for prison sentences of up to five years and/or a stiff fine for anyone found guilty of converting others "by force or by allurement or by any fraudulent means."

It also encouraged members of the public to report cases of suspected forced conversion.

Minority groups challenged the constitutionality of the bill, and the Supreme Court ruled in August 2005 that it was incompatible with Article 10 of the constitution, which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion to every citizen.

An amended draft was tentatively approved in May 2005, but presidential elections in November 2005 and a breakdown in peace negotiations with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam slowed passage of the legislation.

Solzhenitsyn backs Orthodox call that disputes Western 'freedom'

Jonathan Luxmoore

Warsaw (ENI) — Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, for many years a dissident against Soviet communism, has defended an Orthodox church-sponsored document calling for a new concept of human rights to counter Western notions of freedom said to lack "moral norms".

"Limitless human rights are what our cave-dwelling ancestor already had — nothing prevented him from depriving his neighbor of prey or finishing him off with a cudgel," Solzhenitsyn told the Moskovskiy Novosti weekly newspaper. "Even to call for self-restraint is considered ridiculous and funny. However, it is only self-restraint that offers a moral and reliable way out of any conflict."

The 87-year-old writer was reacting to a "Declaration on Human Rights and Dignity" adopted by

the tenth World Russian People's Council, which met at Moscow's Christ the Savior basilica from April 4-6 and was chaired by Orthodox Patriarch Alexei II of Moscow.

The document said the world faced "a conflict between civilizations with different understandings of the human being." It stated it was unacceptable to use human rights "to legitimize behavior condemned by both the traditional morality and historical religions."

Solzhenitsyn said the director of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Metropolitan Kirill, had been right to assert that personal freedoms should not "threaten the fatherland" or be used to "insult religious and national feelings."

He added, "If Russia were to join the North Atlantic Alliance, which

is engaged in propaganda and forcibly inculcating the ideology and practices of today's Western democracy in various parts of the planet, it would lead not to an expansion, but to a decline, of Christian civilization."

The human rights declaration said Russians rejected "the policy of double standards with regard to human rights," as well as "attempts to use them for imposing a particular socio-political system."

Solzhenitsyn won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1970. His books include "The Gulag Archipelago" a factual account of Stalin's terror for which he was exiled to the West in 1974. He returned to Russia in 1994 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and has often defended Orthodox tradition against Western popular culture.

Indian churches hail defeat of party that passed anti-conversion law

Anto Akkara

New Delhi (ENI) — Churches in India's southern Tamil Nadu state have hailed the drubbing in regional elections received by the ruling party which had backed an anti-conversion law seen as harmful to Christians.

"Definitely, Christians have reasons to rejoice," Esther Kathioli, secretary of Tamil Nadu Council of Churches, told Ecumenical News International on May 15 from the state capital of Chennai. "Christians were let down by the [outgoing] government and our people seem to have given a clear verdict."

The ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

(AIADMK) party and its allies could muster only 69 of the 234 seats in the state legislature when the votes were counted on May 11.

On the other hand, the opposition alliance of Democratic Progressive Alliance that had stood with the Christians during their protests against the anti-conversion bill, garnered 163 seats, a two thirds majority in the state legislature.

"We are proud of the people for exercising their democratic rights responsibly," the Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, executive secretary of United Evangelical Lutheran Church of India that groups 11 Lutheran churches, told ENI from Chennai.

Martin noted that most Chris-

tians and other minorities voted against the ruling party for its failure on several counts including the controversial anti-conversion bill "that hurt the minorities badly." "Some church leaders even campaigned publicly against the ruling party," he said.

Ignoring protests by Christians, Muslims, civil rights groups and opposition parties, the ruling party had in 2002 passed the controversial bill to ban conversions by "fraud, force or inducement" without debate in the state assembly.

Christians account for just over six per cent of Tamil Nadu's 62 million people. Muslims make up eight per cent.

Vatican and WCC pursue common code on religious conversion

Geneva (ENI) — The World Council of Churches (WCC) says it is launching with the Vatican a three-year joint study project aimed at developing a shared code of conduct on religious conversion where charges of proselytizing can trigger tensions in some societies.

"The issue of religious conversion remains a controversial dimension in many interconfessional and interreligious relations," said the Rev. Hans Ucko, head of the WCC's interreligious relations office. "We hope that at the end of this study project, we will be able to propose a code of conduct that will affirm that commitment to our faith never translates into denigration of the other."

The study project, named "Interreligious reflection on conversion: from controversy

to a shared code of conduct," was launched with a May 12-16 meeting in Rome.

The WCC represents more than 560 million adherents from 348 churches from mainly Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican traditions, while the Catholic Church is Christendom's largest denomination with some 1.2 billion followers.

About 30 participants from different regions and religious traditions were expected to attend the meeting that assesses religious conversion from an interreligious point of view.

The project will first discuss religious conversion from a Christian perspective and later the establishment of a shared code of conduct which is expected to

distinguish between witness and proselytism. It will aim to make respect for freedom of thought, conscience and the religion of others a primary concern in any encounter between people of different faiths.

The study will be jointly undertaken by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the WCC's Office on Interreligious Relations and Dialogue. Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Indigenous religious traditions are expected to participate, in addition to Christians.

Web sites:
wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/index_e.html
www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/index.htm

MAY 29, 2006

Church

Islamic militants confess beheading three girls in Indonesia

Sarah Page

DUBLIN (Compass Direct) – Police in Indonesia announced that suspected Islamic terrorists have confessed to beheading three Indonesian schoolgirls in Poso, on the island of Sulawesi, in October 2005.

Five of the suspected terrorists were arrested on May 5 in Tolitoli regency, Central Sulawesi. The Jakarta Post identified them as Apriyantono, alias Irwan; Arman, alias Haris; Asrudin, Nano and Abdul Muis (some Indonesians use only a single name).

“Two of the arrested men were involved in the murders,” national police spokesman Brig. Gen. Anton Bachrul Alam told reporters. “Another was detained for carrying ammunition, while the other two were arrested as accessories to the crimes.”

Two additional suspects have not yet been publicly identified.

An Associated Press (AP) report initially said two of the seven suspects were associates of Noordin Top, a key leader of the homegrown terrorist group, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Alam, however, has since insisted that, “it’s certain they weren’t involved with Noordin.”

AP reported that all seven men had confessed to playing a role in beheadings of the three Christian teenagers on October 29, 2005.



The men attacked four girls – Theresia Morangke, 15, Alfita Poliwo, 17, Yarni Sambue, 15, and Noviana Malewa, 15 – early in the morning as they walked to a Christian school in Poso district. The first three girls were beheaded; Malewa received serious injuries to her face and neck but survived the attack.

Malewa later described the attackers as six men wearing black shirts and masks, and said one of the men carried a two-way radio.

The girls’ heads were wrapped in black plastic bags; one was left on the steps of a church in nearby Kasiguncu village, and the other two near a police station five miles from Poso town. The bags contained a note stating in part, “We will murder 100 more Christian teenagers and their heads will be presented as presents.”

The men are also suspects in other violent attacks on Christians,

including the murder of the Rev. Susianty Tinulele, 26, who was shot at the Effatah Church in Palu, Central Sulawesi, on July 18, 2004 by a gunman who entered the church wearing a mask. Four teenagers sitting outside the church were also injured in the attack.

Two more schoolgirls – Siti Nuraini and her friend Ivon Maganti, both 17 – were shot in the face on November 8. Nuraini died from her wounds but Maganti survived the attack.

Machete-wielding assailants also attacked three young people, killing one of them, on November 18; and a Christian couple were shot and seriously wounded on November 19.

Over 1,000 people were killed in bloody sectarian clashes between Muslims and Christians in Central Sulawesi between 2000 and 2001. The Malino Declaration (also known as Malino I), signed in December 2001, stemmed the worst violence, but sporadic bombings and attacks, mostly targeting the Christian community, have continued.

Police suspect JI involvement; several terrorist training camps exist in the jungles of Sulawesi, and at least one ex-trainee has admitted being trained to attack Christians.

Expel Christian Zionists says Palestinian inter-religious liaison cleric

Michele Green

Jerusalem (ENI) – A senior Palestinian Muslim cleric has lambasted pro-Israeli Christian organizations as being in the hands of Satan and called for them to be expelled from churches around the world.

Hamed Al-Tamimi, a senior cleric in the Palestinian Authority’s Islamic Council and the director of its inter-religious dialogue committee, made the call in an article published in Arabic on the official Palestinian Authority Web site earlier in May.

“Christian Zionists are a group who adopted Satan as God who drives their crazy nature. They have praised depravity and cursed virtue, they have turned the moral scale upside down and have reached [a point] in which forgery, deception and lying have turned into descriptions of world policy, which is led by the Zionism on both its branches – the Jewish and the Christian,” Tamimi wrote, according to a translation provided by the Israel-based Palestine Media Watch organization.

Tamimi asserted that pro-Israeli Christian groups should be “expelled by the world Church, since [they are] a dangerous distortion and a big deviation from the true Christian faith, which concentrates on Jesus. (Christian Zionism) defends a national po-

litical program which considers the Jewish race supreme.”

Tamimi singled out the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) which represents millions of pro-Israeli Christians worldwide, especially Evangelical groups, and it staunchly supports Israel.

“We prefer to ignore them and continue undeterred with our biblical mandate to comfort the Jewish people,” said David Parsons, a spokesperson for the Christian Embassy. “The ICEJ maintains that Christians can promote peace in the Holy Land by supporting Israel’s right to live in peace and security” so Israel can “peacefully negotiate with her Palestinian and Arab neighbors all the difficult issues facing the region,” Parsons said in a statement.

Christian-Zionists, as they are often called, believe the establishment of the state of Israel and the in gathering of Jews there is part of biblical prophecy that will lead to the Second Coming of Jesus.

They have been criticized by some Christian groups as ignoring the plight of the Palestinians through their unwavering support for Israel. Palestinian Christians often say their role undermines the situation on the ground for Arab Christians in the Holy Land.

German Muslims and Jews slam ‘Christian’ children’s initiative

Frauke Brauns

Bielefeld, Germany (ENI) – Muslim and Jewish groups in Germany have both rapped the government minister for the family, saying they were left out of a “Coalition for Education” initiative she launched with Christian leaders.

“In principle the Coalition has the right idea, but not when its sole focus is on Christian values,” the secretary-general of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Stephan Kramer, said after the launch of the program by family minister Ursula von der Leyen.

Separately, the Deutsche Welle radio station quoted Ayyub Axel Köhler, chairperson of the Central Council of Muslims, saying: “In the interest of the neutrality of the state, it is absolutely imperative that other religions are invited.”

Von der Leyen announced the initiative in May at a press conference flanked by Lutheran Bishop Margot Kaessmann and Roman Catholic Cardinal Georg Sterzinsky.

The federal government minister said she would work with churches to develop guidelines on raising children. “The idea is that we

should give more of a priority to values-oriented upbringing,” she said, noting that the two churches had a wealth of experience in this area.

Von der Leyen is a mother of seven children. In recent interviews she has said she favors a traditional view of families and of children being educated in Christian values. She noted that as a member of German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s centre-right Christian Democratic Union she took seriously the word “Christian” in her party’s name.

A second phase of the educational program would seek to include other religious organizations, she said at the launch.

Lutheran Bishop Kaessmann defended von der Leyen’s standpoint by noting that 73 per cent of non-governmental kindergartens in Germany are run by the churches.

And Cardinal Sterzinsky said, “We stand for the values that society needs today.”

The churches have already backed another program of the family minister to provide “parental money” to families if a parent stays at home to look after a newborn child.

Let UN peacekeepers take over from African Union, say churches

Fredrick Nzwill

Nairobi (ENI) – Africa’s largest grouping of churches has urged that UN peacekeepers step in for duties carried out by African Union (AU) troops following the signing in Nigeria of a peace agreement between Sudan’s government and Darfur’s biggest rebel group.

“It is our fervent prayer that efforts will continue to get the remaining rebel groups on board with the peace plans to ensure a lasting peace to the three-year conflict,” the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) said in an May 8 statement after the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army and the government signed the agreement.

The Nairobi-based church grouping said it remained concerned that two smaller rebel groups rejected the accord signed on May 5 for the troubled western region of Africa’s biggest country, which has been engulfed in one of this century’s most debilitating conflicts. The Darfur conflict has seen mainly black Africans from

Darfur becoming refugees after conflicts involving mainly northern Arabs.

Following the accord, the AACC urged Sudan to allow UN peacekeepers to take over from 7,000 AU troops, saying a much more robust mediating presence was required for the Darfur region which is about the size of France.

A separate demand for UN troops turned violent when the international body’s humanitarian chief Jan Egeland, aid workers and journalists were forced to flee a refugee camp in Darfur on May 8 after a demonstration in which an aid worker was attacked. The incident at the Kalma Camp in south Darfur occurred during a protest by refugees demanding international troops be brought in to protect them.

The conflict in recent weeks spilled over to neighboring Chad, worsening a separate conflict in that country. More than 200,000 people from Darfur have sought refuge in eastern Chad following attacks by the Janjaweed, a pro-Sudanese

government Arab militia.

“We are convinced that as much as the Darfur crisis fuels the conflicts in Chad, the Chadian situation in turn fuels the Darfur crisis,” the African church leaders said in their statement.

Sudan blames Chad for supporting the Sudan Liberation Army, while Chad blames the rebel army of aiding the United Front for Democratic Change (FUDC), which is seeking to overthrow President Idriss Deby.

Late in April, the Chad Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conference appealed for dialogue between the government and the rebels. They had wanted the government to suspend the general elections held on May 3 and rebels to offer a cease-fire. “The situation in the country is critical,” the Catholic bishops had said in a statement which noted that national dialogue had failed due to the extension of presidential mandates through a constitutional modification and the push to go to elections despite opposition parties’ protests.

Friendship

How I lost (part of) a liver and gained a friend

Ineke Medcalf-Strayer

I did not know Heather well. She was not in my circle of friends, but sometimes we found ourselves in the same Bible Study group or church event.

I fix computers (or try to) and help seniors with email, etc. along with my regular job at *Christian Courier*. About two years ago, Dwayne, Heather's husband, said they had problems with their computer and asked me to look at it. I did, and eventually had it working better. That following Sunday there was a card in our church mailbox – a thank you from Dwayne and Heather with the note: "You are our angel." Well, that really impressed me. I've been called many things but angel has never been one of them.

Fast forward a year or so. There were reports and prayer requests for Heather in church. She had been diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver brought on by Hepatitis C. Some members of our Bible study group began helping with the housework and cooking meals, especially when Heather was going through a particularly bad period.

In late June of 2004, Dwayne shared in church that Heather had been accepted for a liver transplant. He explained that liver transplants were usually done when a cadaver liver became available, but in Toronto there was also the living liver donor program. The wait for a cadaver liver would be about two years, so having a living donor would be preferable for someone in Heather's condition. A cadaver liver might come too late.

Early July, when our Bible study group had a BBQ, I found myself sitting beside Heather. The note Dwayne had written a year or two earlier crossed my mind, and before I knew it, I told Heather that, if possible, I would donate part of my liver. After all, I was healthy and my bloodtype is O+, which means I can donate to all blood groups. At the BBQ Heather said that they were waiting for information from Toronto explaining the live liver donor program and papers for a potential donor to sign.

But Heather was reluctant to use a living donor and to give me the papers. She took some convincing. She was not sure what would motivate a person who was a mere acquaintance to volunteer and at first did not take my offer seriously. She later told me she thought I was some crazy person with a death wish.

Why I volunteered is hard to explain. The words just came and then I knew that I would do it. I never had a day of anxiety or fear. God gave a tremendous peace and calm at this time. Over the next few months and through the ups and downs, Heather and I discussed all the different scenarios. We were not to feel bad or responsible if anything went wrong. After all, she had not asked me – I volunteered. We were both at peace with whatever happens. We are not in control – God is.

The papers I received explained the process for donating. After signing and faxing the forms to the Toronto General Hospital, I told my husband and family. Needless to say, reaction was not exactly enthusiastic. My mother told my husband that he should forbid me from doing it! But he knows from experience how independently minded and resolute (stubborn) I can be. I told our children (ranging in age 18-29) that if they ever needed a liver donor, I would hope someone would step up to the plate for them.

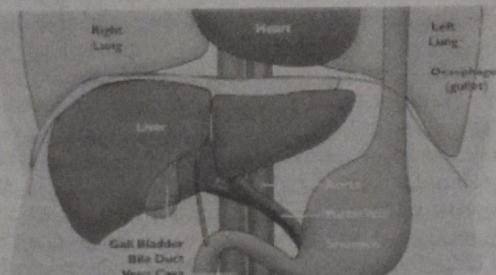
Functions of the liver

Heather had good days and bad. To understand Heather's symptoms, it is helpful to know the role of the liver.

The liver:

- builds special proteins to prevent bleeding
- filters blood and helps fight infection
- makes bile to break down fat in the food you eat
- removes poisons & toxins from everything you eat, breathe and drink
- builds sugar, stores sugar, and releases sugar for energy
- stores vitamins and minerals
- helps break down proteins in the food you eat
- sends hormones to other organs in the body.

Heather's symptoms included water in the abdomen, fatigue, confusion, change in sleep patterns, itching jaundice, spiders (broken blood vessels), easy bruising, fever, infections, among others. As time passed the toxin waste in her body was making her forgetful, and giving her hallucinations. Her husband needed to take a lot of time off work as she would need to be taken to the hospital whenever she had fevers.



The appointments

I do not like showing off my body – just ask my husband. My beach attire is a full size bathing suit covered by an oversize t-shirt even at a clothing optional (okay, I'll say it, nude) beach in St. Maarten! Upon receiving the signed forms, a counselor from the transplant team suggested I first go to my doctor for a general physical and mammogram since I never had this done. Having my breasts squeezed and "down-under" exams tested my resolve.

Next came a series of appointments in Toronto the first being on July 23. I met my



Heather and Ineke after the surgery.

counselor. He would be my contact for any concern etc. that I might have throughout the process. Then I had a CT Scan, X-Ray, ECG and blood tests. Next August 10, a MRI at Princess Margaret Hospital and on August 19 an ultrasound and initial meeting with one of the transplant surgeons.

Roadblocks

That meeting did not go well. Apparently my veins and duct work are narrow, and this would add risk and time to the surgery. The surgeon said the surgical team would meet and decide. His last words were: "They should probably find another donor." I came out feeling dejected.

The following week, I phoned my counselor and found I was still in the running. Good news indeed.

During this time I was also meeting with Dr. Levy, the medical director of transplantation. He peered at the results of the ultrasound and to my horror discovered I had a fatty liver. Unacceptable! Well, I must admit to being a bit overweight and having a poor diet. I ate a lot of bread, pastas, and potatoes, not much vegetables although I'm vegetarian, nor fruit for that matter. Nor did I eat very regularly. Many a day a few slices of bread with gouda cheese or more often, peanut butter, with popcorn for desert and I'm content. My family will never talk about mom's home cooking because it was non-existent. They have had to fend for themselves from a young age. Thankfully my husband learned early on in the marriage not to expect too much on that front anyway. My mother always felt sorry for him and tried to make up for her daughter's shortfalls by cooking meals.

Back to the liver. Eat healthy. New ultrasound in five weeks.

Well, I ate beans, fruit, almonds. And I ate often rather than a lot at once. Carrots, celery, broccoli, yams. Very little or no bread.

My next ultrasound was an improvement but still not good enough. Yet it was encouraging to be on the right track. To my amazement, I was actually feeling more energetic with the new food regiment.

In October, a lady from our congregation had surgery and people from the church made meals for her husband and family. On hearing this, my husband softened his opposition to the surgery. There was a silver lining – he would eat well!

After another five weeks, there were more blood tests and another ultrasound. Then I was scheduled for a biopsy. By now it was end of October. The following day, I learned that the result of the biopsy was good. The fat content was at an acceptable level.

The next phase

On November 25 I first met with Social Services. They needed to make sure that the decision to donate was altruistic and not based on financial gain. Also if I considered the financial hardship if I was to be off work for three months. Two hours later, was a meeting with a Doctor of Internal Medicine. He is an independent medical doctor who does not work directly with the transplant team. His task was to provide a separate medical assessment to determine the risks and perhaps order additional tests. Both appointments went well.

Then the dreaded encounter with a psychiatrist. My co-worker chuckled at that one. She doubted my sanity at the best of times. I must admit I was a bit apprehensive because I could not come up with an answer to "Why are you donating?"

I thought I would be nervous but found I was unexpectedly relaxed. Then came the dreaded question. Umm...inner voice... God. I carefully considered each answer on the sanity scale.

The psychiatrist thought I was donating for a relative and I let her believe that. After all, Heather and I are sisters in Christ. I said I believe God was giving me the resources to donate. She asked if my religion

Friendship

was compelling me so that I felt I had no choice. I said no, but it was giving me a peace about it.

Then out of the blue she asked what I thought of the sponsorship scandal. I responded that we have all tried to get something for nothing and lied to protect ourselves so we should not be surprised when other people do likewise. I told her I have been a Liberal since the days of Trudeau. Ah... Trudeau... the magic word. She informed me that she too had great admiration for him and that her family came to Canada largely because of him. We really bonded when I told her that I went to his funeral.

The rest of the time we chatted like old friends. Upon leaving, I asked if I had passed. She said I was a very positive person and of course I passed.

The surgery was first scheduled for January 10. Early December I met with the surgeon who would have the honors. He explained the procedure and the risks. After the incision, they do an ultrasound and x-ray of the bile duct, then expose the blood supply and bile ducts to the part of the liver that would be removed. If there is any abnormality that would make the operation risky, the surgery will then be stopped and the incision closed. This happens in about five percent of donor surgeries. My surgery would start at 8 a.m. and Heather's at 10 a.m. The surgery was expected to take six to eight hours. I would be in step down unit for two days and on a regular floor for five days. He asked if I had any questions or concerns. I could only think of one.

Heather had said that surgeons liked to play music in the operating room and at some subconscious level, we may hear it. So I asked what kind of music he liked to listen to. He said "jazz". I have never really listened to jazz so I told him that I thought gospel or classical might be a better choice. He said if Beethoven was alive today he would play jazz and anyway, classical grated on his nerves and it would be more beneficial if he was in a good frame of mind when doing the surgery. I couldn't argue with that so I asked that he at least keep the volume down. After the surgery, I must say I had no idea what was played or how loud. Nor have I suddenly grown to love jazz.

During this time, I made some funeral requests – just in case. I told my family that they were all to go to the Netherlands and throw my ashes off the dunes into the North Sea. They were to do this near the "vuurtoren" (lighthouse) by Haamstede. That way they can see the area where I was born and have a nice holiday.

My sister instead suggested they go to a warm place – perhaps the Caribbean. They would scatter my ashes there and let the tides take them to the North Sea. I said no way but they could wait until spring and go before the summer rates apply. After all, I

am Dutch and we are practical.

More delays

Heather went for an appointment to see her surgeon. It did not go well. The surgeon noted that she has a hole in her heart and so she had to then see a heart specialist.

There was a delay over Christmas and New Years and we had no definite answers. Heather had more appointments and some were beyond January 10 – the date we were given for the surgery. So January came and went.

After several other delays, I was told that the surgery would be February 21. The week before that date, Heather was finally given the go-ahead. The heart specialist had decided the added risk was minimal since the hole is very small.

This was great news. As you can imagine, the delays had been hard on our families. Especially so for our youngest daughter, Katherine. After time and meeting Heather, and despite her fears, she and the rest of the family were a great support.

Heather was admitted to the hospital the day before the surgery. We met Sunday evening in the hospital food court. It was the first time our families were all together. Heather has two sons. Dana is in the armed forces and had come to Toronto from Edmonton. Nathan, our eldest, had come by bus from Windsor. We had a good visit and the mood was upbeat.

The operation the next day went well. I was in surgery for about eight hours and Heather for about ten hours. She was brought to intensive care and I to a step-down unit. Three days later we were both in a regular ward.

Since Toronto General is a teaching hospital, a group of doctors stopped by each day to note my progress. They would peer at me and ask that all-important question. "Have you passed gas?" When, after a day or two, I told them I did, it was duly noted on their clipboard as if some historical event had occurred and they seemed very pleased. Needless to say when I normally pass gas I do not get this type of response.

The hospital staff encourages walking the halls as soon as possible. At the end of the week, Heather walked over to visit me. Not wanting to be outdone, I decided to see her the following day. Down the hall I went. Then, out of sight of the nurse's station, I spotted it: the lazy persons' way – a wheelchair! I borrowed it, but just before reaching Heather's room, I got off, figuring no one would know. The song that we

sometimes sing in church – "Deceit and falsehood I abhor" – came to mind, but I quickly suppressed it.

It should have been a good day – Tuesday – the day I was going home. Heather would need to stay another few days, but she too was progressing as expected. I was waiting impatiently for Ken and decided to go to Heather's room. Towards 11 o'clock, Ken came in. The weather was not good. It had been snowing and near Mississauga he had spun out on the QEW striking the guardrails.

Ken had a bump on the head from the windshield. He did not get out to check the damage but since the car still drove, he decided to keep going. Heather wanted him to see a doctor; I wondered about the state of the car.

When we got to the car, he had parked it in a no parking zone and you guessed it – a \$65 ticket. I looked at the car and knew it was a write-off. Good thing it still ran and got us home. The damage ended up being more than a '92 Hyundai is worth.

The following morning a health care worker called. She was coming to teach me how to inject myself with the blood thinners. My pre-filled syringes came with a booklet of instructions so I had already injected myself. Anyways, I was not anxious to have someone come to the house. I did not need the added pressure of having to clean it.

Family and the people from the church were a good support. Meals were made. Ken enjoyed the variety. Also word got around about our car. A collection for our family and Heather's family was taken one Sunday.

Heather and I continued to get our strength back and in the summer we went

to Lake Huron for a few days vacation. She also joined me for a protest at Marineland.

At the beginning of the article, I said Heather and I weren't friends. We have now gotten to know each other and become friends and that is perhaps the best reward anyone can have.

We would like to acknowledge the great work that the transplant team at Toronto General Hospital is doing. Lives are being saved through their diligence and care. I hear the complaints on TV about our healthcare system but I believe we have one of the best systems in the world. We could not have had better treatment.

Update

There are still challenges ahead for Heather. The blood supply to a portion of the liver is lacking so that part will die and shrink. The rest of the liver will eventually grow around the shriveled section. Also there is a concern that the Hepatitis C which attacked her liver originally may also be active. That possibility existed from day one, but sometimes many years go by before that happens. As a precaution, she has started on pegasys and copegus which involves shots as well as pills. The side effects can be similar to chemo. She will be on these drugs for at least six months.

Recently, it was thought that Heather's bile duct was blocked as she is quite jaundiced. That has been ruled out.

Now as this issue is going to print, there are further concerns and she is in Toronto General Hospital. We ask for prayers for her and her family.

Reasons to Consider Liver Donation

The option of living liver donation reduces the risk of health deterioration and death for patients who need a liver transplant. In Toronto, at any point in time, there are usually about 250 people waiting for liver transplantation. In 2003, more than 50 people died during their work-up for liver transplantation or while waiting for a donor organ.

Who can be a donor?

Donors must be:

- a blood relative, spouse or friend who shares a compatible blood group with the patient;
- between the ages of 18 and 60 years;
- in good health and a suitable match;
- freely willing to donate.

For more information go to:

www.uhn.ca/programs/transplantation



Heather at Marineland

Review

The hoopla and hooey of The Da Vinci Code

Harry der Nederlanden

The suspense novel *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown has been on the bestseller list for a couple of years already. It has sold more copies than any other novel in U.S. history and the paperback is still selling. Over 40 million copies have been sold, meaning one out of every four adults in the U.S. have read it, and as you read this the movie starring Tom Hanks will have been released. It, too, is expected to break all box office records.

By now there is hardly anyone on this continent who hasn't heard some of the chatter—and serious discussion—about the novel. A year after the publication of the novel ten books had already been written to give further background information about the alleged historical events alluded to in the novel and since then even more have been written to refute the claims made in the novel.

A number of different Christian organizations have created websites dedicated to refuting different “errors” passed off as facts in what is plainly a piece of formulaic fiction. No one would dare claim that *The Da Vinci Code* belongs to the ranks of memorable and worthwhile literature. It is simply a page-turner, a potboiler in which plot is everything and all the fun is in the suspense and in putting together the pieces of an intricate puzzle. Yet, pastors have preached sermons on it, theologians have written long essays about it. To mark the release of the movie, CTV announced it would be visiting several of the locations in London and in Paris that figure prominently in the story. The last time a movie got so much free publicity was with Mel Gibson's *Passion*, but although many churches are talking about using the movie as an opportunity for evangelism, it isn't because Dan Brown has written a Christian novel.

The attack on Christian doctrine

The central bit of so-called history around which the entire plot pivots is that the Jesus of Scripture didn't die, rise again and ascend into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father, but he moved to France, where his offspring formed a royal family line. Did the early disciples confuse France and heaven? No, it was all a conspiracy foisted on the gullible a few hundred years later when the Bishops and the Emperor put their heads together at the Council of Nicea (325) to consolidate power. Not only was Jesus not divine, he was married to Mary Magdalene and had children and a lot of folks knew it. So to hush all that up required a lot of hard work.

One wonders why the mythmakers of the time didn't pick a more likely candidate for deification. But novelists of Dan Brown's stature are often careless with historical details and on close analysis suspense plots

often turn out to have gaping holes. Why the fuss about a piece of second rate fiction?

Some evangelical leaders are calling for a boycott of the film. Others suggest an “othercott,” that is, they are urging Christians to go see another movie on the opening weekend to cut into *The Da Vinci Code* ratings. Good luck! The majority advice, however, seems to lean toward engaging popular culture. Evangelicals are increasingly reluctant to be seen as killjoys and negativists, so most seem to favor exploiting the film as an opportunity for evangelism. Go with your unchurched friends and tell them the truth of the matter, they advise. That's not as easy as it sounds, of course, for the central thesis of the story is that the church has been brainwashing the gullible with falsehoods for hundreds of years. So if you take the side of orthodoxy, you are aligning yourself with the brainwashed.

The whole phenomenon has some people shaking their heads and others frothing. Right wing commentator Pat Buchanan pointed out that only a few weeks ago the Western media were gingerly tiptoeing around a few cartoons that supposedly misrepresented Muhammed, a mere man. Dan Brown's fiction goes much further: it arraigns the Catholic Church and Christianity for peddling what it knew to be a falsehood and for violently suppressing the truth, and

it claims that the one Christians worship as the Son of God is a mere man who was married to Mary Magdalene and had children. Buchanan quotes Archbishop Angelo Amato, the Vatican's secretary for the congregation for the doctrine of the faith: “If such lies and errors had been directed at the Koran or the Holocaust, they would have justly provoked a world uprising.” Why is it an offense to denigrate Muhammed and to deny the Holocaust, but alright to mock the central beliefs of Christianity?

“Putting *The Da Vinci Code* on film, with what it alleges about the Catholic Church, is the moral equivalent of making a movie based on the *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and implying this is the truth about the Jewish plot to control the world,” fumes Buchanan.

David Feddes made similar comments about the novel in one of his Back to God Hour sermons: “What would happen if a similar novel came out depicting Islam as a hoax and the Qur'an as false?” he asked. “Bookstores might go up in flames, and the novel's author might have to go into hiding for fear of his life.” He went on to suggest that there's something wrong with

Christians who swallow such entertainment without qualms.

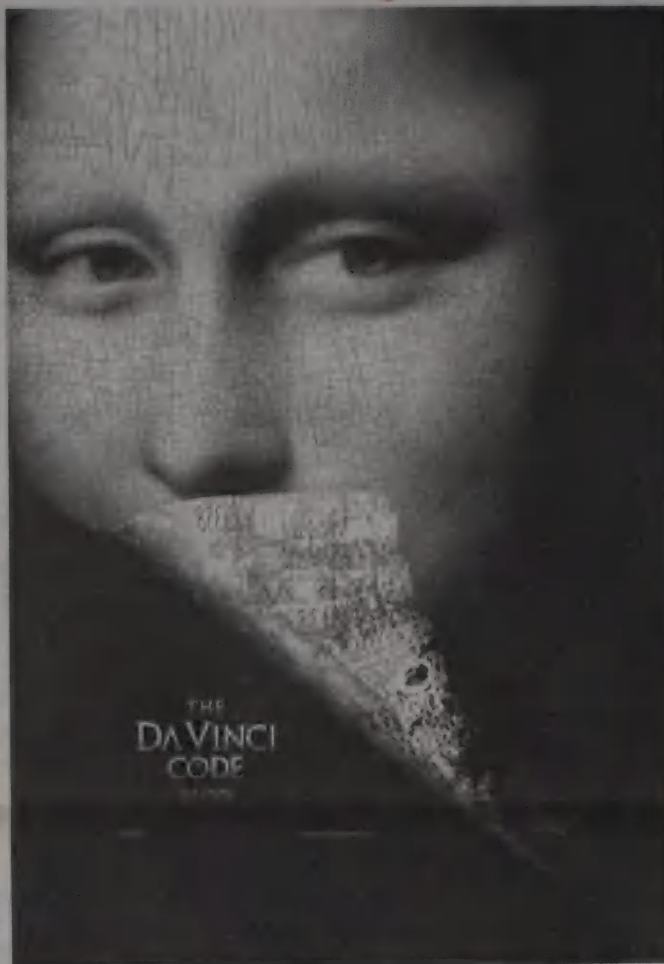
A pastiche of falsehoods

In fact, although the book is obviously fiction, several pastors have reported that the novel has raised questions and doubts even among Christians. That seems hard to believe, because although the author claims that his fiction is rooted in well-researched historical fact, he is ridiculously careless even with facts that are easy to check. No scholars are lining up to defend the accuracy of Brown's account. But why would they? As Tom Hanks remarked when questioned about the furor surrounding the film, it's just a story, “loaded with all sorts of hooey and fun kind of scavenger-hunt-type nonsense.”

At the end of his attack on the film, Archbishop Amato conceded, “The extraordinary success of *The Da Vinci Code* is due to the extreme cultural poverty of many Christian faithful, who are incapable of distinguishing the historical and theological calumnies, insults and errors about Jesus, the Gospels and the Church.” Other church leaders argued that by taking the film so seriously the church is giving the book and the film greater credence than such a flimsy piece of fiction should have.

Here are a few of the obvious errors and distortions that make up the core of the novel. Most are not even new with Brown but have been kicking around for time immemorial among those who love exotic conspiracy lore.

One of the central “clues” exploited by Brown is Da Vinci's famous painting of The Last Supper. The figure that has always been taken to be John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, is actually Jesus' wife, Mary Magdalene, claims Brown. He won't find very many art historians to back him on that fantasy. Many have pointed out that it was common at the time to depict a young studious type of person with rather



Scene from the *Da Vinci code* movie

Review

effeminate features.

The idea that Jesus was married is not seriously entertained by any New Testament scholar, not even by liberals. There is simply nothing to support it and a great deal to contradict it.

Brown represents the divinity of Jesus as having been decided – no, as having been invented – at the Council of Nicea. This is demonstrably false. The vast majority of Christian believers had already confessed Jesus Christ as Lord since the beginning of the church (remember the ICHTHUS symbol?). Nicea was called to deal with the teachings of Arius. Arius did not challenge the divinity of Jesus: he only denied

that Jesus was the Son of God from eternity. And Nicea dealt with far more than Jesus' divinity.

Brown also alleges that the vote at Nicea was a squeaker. But only two bishops did not sign the creedal statement – out of a total of 216 (or 316 – the number is uncertain). Of course, it is true, as Brown maintains, that there was pressure from the Emperor Constantine to reach a consensus, but initially only 17 expressed reservations – and those were not about the divinity of Christ as far as we know.

The *Da Vinci Code* also says that at this time the church authorities selected four gospels out of a possible 80 and proclaimed them as the canon, suppressing the rest. Scholars are pretty well agreed that the four gospels had been accepted as authoritative a full 125 years before Nicea. Later discussions concerned some of the epistles and the book of Revelation.

And the claim that there were 80 gospels is a gross exaggeration. There were only a couple of dozen, and in a great many of these the divinity of Jesus is not in question but his humanity. The gnostics maintained that Jesus only appeared to be human.

Brown assumes that the gnostics favored a sexy Jesus, but the great majority devalued the body and looked forward to salvation as an escape from the body.

The gospel of Mary Magdalene is represented as an original gospel going back to the days of Jesus. It is not. It is a late second century document with very little historical value.

Brown draws on the gospel of Philip for his claim that Mary Magdalene was Jesus "companion" (which he construes as "wife"). But the gospel of Philip is a fourth century gnostic manuscript, which may



Tom Hanks and Audrey Tautou

have been composed a couple of hundred years earlier; but that would still mean it was written some 100 years after the latest of the new Testament gospels.

The Catholic organization Opus Dei, which still exists today, is portrayed as a secretive cult that resorts to blackmail and murder to cover up the dark secrets of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church and Opus Dei have issued statements exposing the many falsehoods the novel contains about this organization alone.

One of the howlers in the novel is its acceptance of the veracity of a document about the Priory of Sion. Earlier this year three Frenchmen admitted that they had forged the document in the 1950's to give themselves an ancient pedigree.

Brown also reinterprets the quest for the Holy Grail, famous from the Arthurian legends, as a quest not for the cup from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper, but as a search for the body of Mary Magdalene. She was the grail, the container of the seed of Jesus, for she bore his children.

Brown also expounds a ludicrous theory about the architecture of Gothic churches. He argues that they abound with secret symbols representing a worship of a goddess, the various parts of the church representing parts of the female anatomy. This is just another bizarre invention that cannot be taken seriously.

Brown even makes the ludicrous assertion that YHWH, the four Hebrew letters for Yahweh, derive from the word Jehovah, which was a union of the masculine Jah and the pre-Hebraic name for Eve – Havah. But it is common knowledge that Jehovah is a 16th century word combining YHWH with the vowels of the word Adonai, which means Lord.

The missing gospels

Even a rather cursory investigation of the claims of *The Da Vinci Code* to historical veracity quickly uncovers a morass of falsehoods and fiction designed to create an exciting story about a vast conspiracy. In short, most of it is simply made up. But why is the book so popular? And why does the story of orthodox Christianity as a conspiracy win so much acceptance?

N. T. Wright, a prominent British theologian and scholar of early Christianity observed: "It can't just be because it's a page-turner; there are plenty of those around. Where does it fit in to our culture? In what way is it saying things that so many people are so eager to hear?"

Wright suggests that our culture and Western Christianity have been softened up for the conspiracy theories of Brown and others like him by scholars and theologians in our seminaries. Scholars like Marcus Borg and Elaine Pagels, often interviewed by the media, have over the last decades developed a mythic history of early Christianity that caters to a post-modern sense of history. Wright says he has encountered the myth in seminaries all across America and Britain.

Here is a summary of the myth as outlined by Wright:

1. There were dozens, perhaps hundreds, of documents in circulation about Jesus that portrayed him more as a human being than as a god-man. And these provide a more reliable picture of Jesus.
2. Our present gospels are late products designed to elevate Jesus to divine status and thus claim more power for the church.
3. Jesus wasn't at all like the figure that appears in our gospels.
4. So Christianity as we know it is a mistake, and
5. Therefore it is high time to get behind these "patriarchal" gospels and to recover a more gentle, more spiritual, more feminine gospel closer to what Jesus preached.

This myth long predates Brown's novel and comes from the so-called gnostic gospels discovered at Nag Hammadi. These include the Gospels of Thomas and of Philip. Scholars like Pagels have been promoting these over the four gospels the church has accepted, claiming that they give a truer picture of early Christianity. We may see this as a parody of the "back to the sources" impulse of the Reformation.

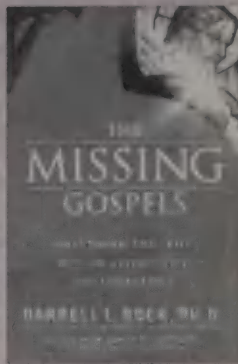
Darrell L. Bock, Research Professor of N.T. Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, has written an excellent and readable overview of these "missing gospels." His *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*

has become a bestseller and is touted as one of the best critiques of the novel and in his new book he has gone a step further. There are plenty of scholarly books out there that examine these ancient documents, but Bock has done an excellent job of introducing this field to the lay reader in *The Missing Gospels: Unearthing the Truth Behind Alternative Christianities* published by Nelson Books.

Some scholars have tried to show that the documents making the rounds in the early centuries of the church possessed little or no unity. They even object to the term "gnostic" to describe the texts discovered at Nag Hammadi. But Bock examines these texts through a grid of key themes: what is taught about the Creator and creation; about the divinity and humanity of Jesus; about the nature of our redemption; and about Jesus' death and what that death means.

He shows that there is a rough pattern in the alternative gospels, one that is decidedly at odds with the teachings of the canonical gospels. In the "missing gospels: creation tends to be seen as evil, Jesus humanity is often muted or questioned, redemption applies only to the spiritual dimension of humanity and the flesh is left behind, so that redemption is essentially an esoteric knowledge revealed to an elite few.

These teachings contradict what was taught by those who knew Jesus from the very beginning of the church. Bock's book shows, as one of the commentators points out, "that most of the 'alternative texts'... are less countercultural than the 'traditional teaching'." Bock's introduction demonstrates appreciation for what can be learned from a study of the other texts, but he shows quite convincingly that the spirit of discernment was at work in the early church, a spirit that an alarming number of Christians are in danger of losing.



Enough already! There are many more historical inaccuracies and other "hokey" that can be unearthed from *The Da Vinci Code*, and there is a flood of books that will do it for you if you are thirsty for more. There is simply no reason to treat the novel as a serious and reliable account of anything.

It is simply popular fiction full of invention. Yet, it is having a tremendous impact, even on Christians. This says less about the quality of Dan Brown's research or fiction writing than about the nature of faith and belief in our time and our society.

Ecclesiastes

The authority of the facts

Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him.

Ecclesiastes 8:5,6 [NIV]

A. A. van Ruler

The safest way to go through life is the way of obedience, and therefore the way of self-subjection and cooperation. As the NIV translation suggests, the Preacher is probably first of all talking about the king's command, and thus of those clothed with authority.

He gives two reasons why we should subject ourselves to the authorities. First, as a matter of self-preservation. If you obey, you will come to no harm; you will not be punished.

Someone who obeys is not helping to turn order into chaos. The punishment imposed by the authorities is destructive to the life of the individual, but the Preacher has more in mind. To ignore those commands is to undermine social order. Society is thrown into disorder and chaos, and eventually it is even more destructive to human life than any punishments meted out by the authorities. Anarchy is the worst thing that can happen to human society.

The Preacher adds another reason: he says that the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. By this he means that the wise take into account the circumstances and opportunity before they act. Part of wisdom is not to act simply in terms of abstract and absolute principles and attempt to impose them by force – even against the givens of reality. This is idealism. Sometimes idealism seems highly spiritual, but it also contains an element of fanaticism. And all fanaticism is unwise.

A wise heart doesn't only take universal principles into account but also concrete reality. In one context, he acts one way and in another an other way. God is not just the author of principles; he is also the author of reality. Reality is a given – in the literal sense that the given situation is a gift of God. When we take this seriously, this infuses an element of relativity – and a degree of mildness – into our attitude and into the way we act. The commands of those who happen to be in authority are part of the given situation, and therefore the wise take heed of those commands.

We must ask ourselves, however, whether the Preacher perhaps means something even deeper. When he says, "The wise heart will know the proper time and procedure," does he just mean that it will take the actual circumstances and opportunities into account? In verse six he goes a step further, adding: "For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter." This greatly widens the scope of his thought. It doesn't just address the king's commands, but it speaks of "every matter." Everything has its own time and way (procedure). This is an important element in the way we experience life and reality and in our sensibility over toward things and events.

It mentions first of all the temporality of everything. Every single thing has its own time. It is not here for all times. It exists only for a time. But when it is here, it *must* be – and it must be at precisely that moment. The present is the most important moment for us; in fact, it is the only thing. The only thing that we deal with is the present and with those things that are here now. Perhaps they didn't even exist awhile ago, and in the future they may no longer exist. But right now they are here, and they must be here – because it is their proper time.



Still life with cardoon and carrots, Juan Sanchez Cotan

In this we catch the glow of God's sovereign good will. Every thing that now exists has been called into being in its proper time by God. To see this and completely accept it is a part of wisdom and one of the fruits of faith.

Things are not just temporal but they are also particular. Each and every thing has not just its own time but also its own way of being. The Hebrew actually says that it has its own right. Every single thing has its own way of being by God's just judgment. Of course, all things are subject to a huge and endless processes of change. But it is God who is changing them. And so are we. But in the present, things are thus and not otherwise. This, too, we must recognize in the depths of our hearts and accept from the inside out. The particular way of being of all things has in it something of God's judicial decree.

When we take all this into consideration, the question of what "command" the text refers to may get a very different answer than the one we began with. We said that the Preacher must first of all have had in mind the king's command, the command of the authorities. But the text doesn't literally say this: it speaks more generally of a command.

Perhaps we ought to think also of the command contained in each and every thing. Each thing has its own time and procedure. It is temporal; it is here now. And in this we are addressed by God's sovereign good will. It is also particular; it is this way and not otherwise. And in this there is something of God's righteous judgment. All of life, we might say, is here by one never-ending judicial command of God. One judicial decree after another.

The Judge is also the Lawgiver, so every judicial ruling is also a norm. Since every thing has its own time and way of being, every thing also has its own command.

And we must obey that command – the commandments – that address us in all things that now exist.

This is, therefore, not just a question of a relative sensitivity to reality. It is a question of a deep and inward wisdom, of godliness (godsvrucht). The reality of the present is wholly a given; it is wholly a gift of God. But also part of God's decree. In that decree God gives us his judgment and also his commandment. This is how we learn what he requires of us and what we must do.

To put it differently, we can also say that wisdom and godliness are not things that flutter high above reality. We can only come to know God's will if we put our ear closely to the concrete situation in which we live. Genuine piety and a genuine sense of reality are two sides of the same coin.

But everything hinges on obeying the command in this sense of the word. Only then will we come to no harm. If we go contrary to the will of God as it comes to us in a given situation, misery will press heavily upon us (8:6). Just as no one has power over the wind to contain it, so wickedness will not release those who practice it (8:8).

Those who oppose God's will also oppose the reality of the world. They will discover that the world is bigger and mightier than the individual. We cannot stand up against it. We must become part of it. We must subject ourselves to it. We must obey. We must heed the reality of the world – as God's world, and therefore God's will.

Travel

Tulip time in Holland



Anne Gordon

Centuries ago, the gardeners working for the Countess of Holland, Jacoba van Beieren, were probably harvesting cabbages and herbs in the very place where I sat on the edge of a pond in the Netherlands' famous Keukenhof. In the 15th century, this was the great lady's kitchen garden, a vital resource for Teylingen Castle where entertaining during the hunting season was a daily occurrence.

Today, 600 years later, the Countess's kitchen garden has been supplanted by drifts of tall, elegant tulips, brilliantly colored hyacinths, a golden rain of forsythias, crocuses, fritillarias, and dozens of other spring bulbs. In shaded dells, yellow trout lilies and cowslips flourish in an informal woodland setting. Trees heavy with spring blossoms, ponds with fountains, and a corn windmill with gently turning blades draw several million visitors to this garden each year. Keukenhof (or "kitchen garden"), with an annual planting of seven million bulbs, is reputedly the largest bulb garden in the world.

On a balmy day in April, I had discovered not only an exceptional garden but a garden with pizzazz. Just a few feet from my seat, as I enjoyed a lavish helping of Dutch waffles soaked in syrup, a traditional barrel organ belted out an old-time melody that enticed passersby to dance.

A small black girl with a peppercorn hairdo executed an imaginative dance routine in front of an admiring audience. Flinging constraint to the wind, two older women replicated dance steps of the past as they cavorted, as uninhibited as teenagers, to the music of the barrel organ. A Maurice Chevalier lookalike swung his cane in the air and twirled it boisterously

as he, too, danced by.

Just days before, I stood on the edge of a bulb field adjoining Keukenhof, gazing across a vast, striped floral extravaganza of multicolored tulips, yellow daffodils, and dazzling blue, pink, and mauve hyacinths.

A young Frenchwoman nearby turned in my direction. Breathing in the heavy sweet perfume that literally overwhelmed one's olfactory senses, she kissed the tips of her bunched fingers in a familiar gesture of appreciation. We visitors were — one and all — captivated by the essence of spring.

The tulip arrived in the Netherlands from Turkey in the mid-16th century. It is Holland's "national" flower and, in time, became a most volatile investment.

Within 100 years of rooting in Dutch soil, the value of certain tulip bulbs had soared. Semper Augustus, a deep scarlet tulip streaked with white-hot flames spreading from the flower's base to the tips of its curled petals, was valued at 4,000 euros at today's exchange rate (about \$5,100). These elegant blooms were featured in Alexandre Dumas's classic novel, "The Black Tulip." They were also the focus for several painters of the period, including Rembrandt and Hans Bollongier.

As far back as the 11th century, Persian and Turkish sultans had already succumbed to the charms of the tulip. Suleiman the Magnificent, sultan of the Ottoman Empire, even had tulips embroidered on his underwear. Because the flower was central to his vision of an earthly paradise, he planted them lavishly in his formal garden, as did many of his cohorts.

Since then, there has been no dimming of the flower's popularity. Tulips of every color and configuration form the basis of Keukenhof's floral treasure. About 2,000 varieties of tulips are on display this season.

I have always savored "art in the park," and my favorite piece in Keukenhof was a metal sculpture entitled "Op Uitskuij" (On the Lookout) — an amusing and vigilant chorus of angelic "ribbiting" frogs by Dutch artist



Jean Pierre Belaen.

In a 50,000-square-foot area of enclosed pavilions, each named after a member of the Dutch royal family, there is one devoted entirely to an exotic jungle of orchids. In the 70-acre open-air garden, visitors can wander through the Beukenlaan (an avenue of beech trees), explore the Japanese Garden and the Music Garden, and marvel at the ancient flower varieties in the Historical Garden. In the latter, the gardeners are dressed in authentic costumes of the Middle Ages.

Keukenhof now serves as an exhibition site for 90 Royal Warrant Holders, representing the country's premier bulb merchants. Together they propagate nearly 9 billion flower bulbs each year. Seventy percent of the world's bulbs emanate from these shores. For one of the smallest countries in Europe, that constitutes an astonishing abundance of beauty.



Op de uitkijk

Pausing at the Dutch Border

We pause at the Dutch border in flowering fields of bright red tulips and rows of poplars stretching into space as though we somehow got trapped inside a Van Gogh painting completely dazzled until we hear the chime of a church bell from a steeple in Sluis gently drawing us back to where we think we are.

Richard F. Fleck



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Earthkeeping

Build soil

Curt Gesch

He [King Uzziah] had people working his fields and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.

II Chronicles 26:10b

Would you like a recipe for making "Mistholz"? Here's how the Volga German Colony made it, according to Fred C. Koch.

There was always a large accumulation of manure in a normally stocked barnyard. In due course this became mixed with litter from the barn stalls. In the spring, this conglomerate was spread out evenly over a hard, level surface to a depth of about a foot or more. It was wet down and then horses were driven round and round over the mass until it was well mixed and compacted. When the layer was dry enough it was rolled and tamped firm and flat. Next it was cut into small blocks with a flat spade; after further drying, these were stacked like firewood and allowed to "cure" under the burning sun through the summer. By fall they were ready to use in both heating and cook stoves. The Mistholz was slow-burning, had a high heat value, and was virtually odorless.

This "manure wood" was the fuel for the German colonists living on the Russian steppe who had virtually no firewood or coal at the invitation of Catherine the Great. Koch says that this fuel "continued to be the principal heating fuel until the Bolshevik revolution" when livestock was confiscated or starved to death.

I am impressed by the resourcefulness of these pioneer colonists who were dumped unceremoniously on the steppe to fend for themselves with no local wood for either housing (they lived in dug-out caves) or fuel. They had to create their own sod-breaking plows, figure out the best way to prepare the soil, hand-harvest the grain . . . more difficult, perhaps, than the trials of the North American prairie settlers.

I am also extremely unimpressed by the effect on the soil that a hundred-plus years of continuous grain farming had, *sans* manure. The Russian steppe-land, according to Koch, was wearing out with a soil "pretty well stripped of important chemical and organic properties after decades of tillage without fertilization."

I wonder if Uzziah's farming and ranching activities were carried out with exploitation or soil-care as the driving ethos. I'd like to think the latter: after all, "he loved the soil."

I'd like to think that Uzziah was really a soil-lover, not just a lover of rural or ranching life. I'd like to think that he had been taught to care for the soil as if it were a precious jewel. That he cared for (cf. Genesis 2:15) soil as a steward of the divine Soil-Keeper. That he didn't exploit, but *tended* the soil while he *worked* it to produce healthy plants and food. That he saw soil as a provision of God, not as *dirt*.

The poet, Robert Frost used soil-building as a metaphor in his "political pastoral" called *Build Soil*. He said this:

*... Plant, breed produce,
But what you raise or grow, why, feed it out,
Eat it or plow it under where it stands,
To build the soil. For what is more accursed
Than an impoverished soil, pale and metallic?
What cries more to our kind for sympathy?*



Spreading manure the old way in Amish

It's hard to build soil when you need the manure for fuel and need a crop every year for survival. Thanks be to God that most of us don't live in such conditions. We have learned, I hope, from soil exploiters, either pioneers or misguided "scientific" soil-miners. We know about organic matter and how valuable it is. We know about plowing down crops of "green manure," grown solely to improve the soil. We know that following a legume like alfalfa with a heavy feeder is a natural way to use stored fertility.

And, more than anything else, we've learned about compost. Not "garbage piles", but compost. Since the time of Sir Albert Howard's work at Indore, India, we've known that combining animal wastes with a proper balance of carbonaceous material, air, and moisture can produce fertilizer and soil conditioner better for the soil than manure alone.

Backyard gardeners sometimes throw a bunch of clippings and wastes together, call it compost, and feel righteous about "doing their part." The righteous feeling usually disappears about the time that the anaerobic bacteria produced by such piles begins to smell even worse than manure and the suburban neighbours cry "foul."

If you try a new ethic that sees what others call *waste* as part of God's provision for nurturing soil, then you'll change all sorts of things. Some of your changes may make you seem a bit weird. One Dutch immigrant told me that he was embarrassed when his father used to dart out into the street with a shovel to collect horse manure from passing carts in the 1940's. Another person tries to sell his house which needs some sprucing up, to be sure. He greets prospective buyers with a tour of the house and - to the dismay of the realtor - with a hand jammed into the garden or flowerbed and an exclamation: "Just look at this soil!"

If you're a livestock farmer you may think about in-

vestigating new farm-sized compost turners and processors. If you are a crop farmer, you may want to rethink whether caring for the soil is possible without having an animal component to your farm. If you have a soil erosion problem, you may consider how Merle Claerbout of Oostburg, Wisconsin, solved it: he switched his entire row-crop land to alfalfa and now has virtually eliminated erosion problems. (And with local riding clubs proliferating, he has a ready market for all the hay he can produce.)

I'd like to try making *Mistholz* as an experiment. But what a waste of good manure! I'd much prefer to mix it with the other ingredients to produce a compost that turns the soil into something so rich that "a broomstick stuck into it would sprout." A soil so friable that it makes my back rejoice. A soil nurtured, tended, and treasured.

Robert Frost enjoins,

*Let those possess the land, and only those,
Who love it with a love so strong and stupid
That they may be abused and taken advantage of
And made fun of by business, law, and art;
They still hang on.*

And, I would add, they have the approval of Uzziah, and the Creator of soil.

Fred C. Koch, *The Volga Germans: In Russian and the Americas, from 1763 to the Present*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977.

Family and Media

Hide and seek

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Years ago at bedtime one night, two-year-old Benjamin and four-year-old Tamara were talking about children getting injured. Finally, Tamara turned to Benjamin and said comfortingly, "You won't get hurt now because we're in the house." Tamara believed that no harm could come to children who were being cared for by their parents at home. Of course, that's not true. Many children are hurt in their homes, either by fires, natural disasters, neglect, accidents, or abuse.

Still, Tamara was on to something. At its best, home is a refuge and sanctuary, a hiding place in the biblical sense, reflecting David's description of God: "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance" (Psalm 32:7).

As Christian parents, we want to make our homes safe hiding places that offer children love and nurture, protection and shelter, and songs of joy and messages of hope so that they learn to serve God and neighbor. In order to do this, we need to seek a deeper understanding of who God is and how, when we imitate him, our children are strengthened and blessed. God promised the people of Israel, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart," (Jeremiah 29:13).

What will we discover about God when we seek him with all our heart? And how will what we find influence our children?

First, God consistently gives his children unconditional love, justice, grace, and forgiveness. He constantly keeps all his promises to them and unfailingly provides for all their needs. As the author of Hebrews so comfortingly states, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

When we emulate God's consistency, we help our children feel unafraid and secure. One evening when camping, I realized how important consistency is. Tamara, then five years old, heard strange noises outside our pop-up camper and became afraid of the spooky, shifting shadows undulating on the trailer's canvas. She couldn't sleep. Needing reassurance, she said, "You're always the same person, right, Mom?"

I answered, "Yes. Do you like that?"

"Yes," she said and drifted off to sleep.

Of course, we aren't perfectly consistent. But when we strive to be, we show our kids that they can count on us, and we teach them to be dependable.

Second, God takes his children's concerns seriously and addresses both their major and minor problems. David testifies, "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry" (Psalm 40:1).

When we imitate God's listening skills, we help our children feel valued and significant. Upon returning home from a birthday party he had eagerly anticipated, six-year-old Benjamin burst into tears because he had lost one of his favorite gloves. My husband, Rinke, and I assured him that we would do all we could to find it.

Rinke and Benjamin returned to the parking lot next



Brad and Angelina – the emotional divide in full swing?

Pretty soon I discovered that I was writing a book about the emotional divide between men and women. At its harshest...sex is the price women pay for love and children, and love and children is the price men pay for sex. Jim Crace

Can any of us miss the faces of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie on the supermarket tabloids as we check out our groceries at the cashier? One month they are smiling broadly as they happily clutch their two adopted children, while the following month they are grimacing tightly as they glare into the ever present and intrusive camera lens. I mean, give us a break. For close to a year we have been part and parcel of Brad and Angelina's hot and heavy romance as they embraced the rhythms of nature leaving Angelina heavy of breast and biological child (at the time of writing).

Yet, do we really care? And, that is the point. I guess we do. I suppose. At the same time, I am sure we all agree with the ever patient Brad when he once growled at the paparazzi, "Isn't this a bit over the top?" Which of course it is.

The frenzy surrounding Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie and tossed aside Jennifer Aniston is reminiscent of years back when Elizabeth Taylor, Eddie Fisher and tossed aside wife Debbie Reynolds were the hot headline of the day. A few years later the dynamics were replayed by Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton and tossed aside Eddie Fisher and Sybil Burton. And so the world goes on.

What is it about romantic triangles that prod's people's interest? Is it curiosity about the power of sex or is it about our longing for the always elusive yet hoped for connection of perfection? Furthermore, why are people mourning Brad and Jennifer's failed marriage? Could it be this attractive, rich and famous, yet family-oriented couple disappointed their fans and the general public? The reality being: if these two kids can't make it, who can?

I believe the twist in this triangle is all about Angelina. For centuries a temptress has been portrayed as evil and someone from whom all men should flee. Yet, here we have a highly sought-after U.N. humanitarian spokesperson ready to make a global difference the hard way by personally adopting two children from foreign lands while presently awaiting the birth of her first biological child in Namibia and working for Global Campaign for Education. This view does not fit the stereotype of the mistress of a dangerous liaison. Rarely is she a harried mommy, clutched and climbed on by little people with sticky fingers who demandingly implore her to put her own needs on hold in exchange for veggie feedings and

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

diaper changes. I mean, would the male partner in this kind of arrangement actually stick around?

This brings me to Jim Crace's quote about men, women and the act of love (see above). I will leave it up to my readers to ponder the truth of the statement. There is no doubt Angelina is one of the sexiest women in the world by secular standards. So, I suppose, most men, if they are honest, (although hesitatingly) are somewhat envious of Brad. Even a local columnist in a daily paper went on and on about how her spouse would not, could not, and definitely will not, pass up a liaison with Angelina in the future should she ever fall into his lap! Even her tongue in cheek writing style could not camouflage the fantasy of the restless male.

Angelina herself, however, could be on a totally different page. A few years ago she confided in an interview she would be have no problem falling for someone who was crazy about her kids. A recent study proves her point. Published in *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, the study asked women to rate photographs of men on four qualities: "likes children," "masculine," "physically attractive" and "kind." Then they were asked to rate how attractive they found each man for short-term and long-term romance. It showed the more they perceived the men as liking kids, the more likely they could see having a long-term relationship. In short, women are good at picking up on facial cues that are related to paternal qualities. And I suppose, for Angelina, Brad was her man! Not that separation, divorce as well as new-borns before nuptials would be his bag considering his close-knit family roots. Still, it seems lust and love won the day for this couple, come to think of it, their scandalous behavior is no different from what went on in the Bible.

The point is the Creator designed us to look outward and make this world a better place especially when we have more trinkets and trash than is good for us. To find a partner who shares these hopes and dreams, no matter how compromising the relationship, is a treasure at best. The difficulty is living out the big picture while working through the unavoidable complexities of everyday contemporary life. Jim Crace, the above author, hopes his novel *Six* undermines the above harsh assumptions about men and women and the act of love. In real life, time will tell if Brad and Angelina are able to find a balance in an area of life that makes the world go round and round.

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca



to the bowling alley where the party had been held and searched between rows of cars. Out of the corner of his eye Benjamin saw a little lump on the pavement. His glove! He was jubilant. Not only did Benjamin locate his glove, he also received the gift of being heard and being helped. God hears our cries about the small details of our lives, but he also hears us when we cry out about big issues. Christian parents who want to model God's character will give their kids room to discuss difficult concerns.

Soon after my friend Irene died, my children often talked about death.

When nine-year-old Tamara and seven-year-old Benjamin discussed skating, Benjamin said, "I just get scared that the ice will crack. Or that if I'm skating along looking at the sky, I'll fall into the water."

Tamara continued, "Would you rather die in your own

bed or in the hospital?"

Benjamin replied, "At home. Because in the hospital they give you those treatments, and they don't feel very good."

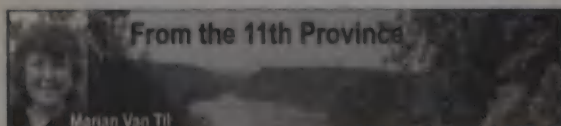
God listens to us when we face life's tough realities. When we imitate that aspect of God's character, our kids will learn they always have someone to turn to and that no topic is too difficult to tackle.

Third, God gives voice to his love for his children. Numerous Scriptures proclaim the message of 1 John 3:1a, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

When we follow God's example and openly articulate our love for our children, we fill a deep longing in them.

See Hide and seek continued on page 18 ...

Reflections



From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

In the 10 months I've been writing this column (or rather, page) I haven't had any trouble deciding what to write about. Until now. Each month my subject has gelled, usually with relative ease, and always accompanied by prayer for guidance and insight which I've felt was answered in a variety of ways. Each monthly page has emerged when something I had been thinking about periodically came to the fore and gradually molded itself into what I like to think was a finished, logically argued essay or well-wrought personal tale.

That's not to say I've been equally happy with every column; there is always room, but not always time, for improvement. And I've occasionally wondered who, if anybody, might be reading this stuff. I guess anyone who has ever written a published piece on any subject wonders whether he or she actually has an audience, and who they might be. I've discovered I have at least a few readers, so I'm happy. Or rather, they have discovered (I'm not sure I should say "uncovered") themselves to me. I'm getting a trickle of email responses, which I greatly value. Those responses have given encouragement or correction, or both.

No 'magic' marker

When I say that topics have come easily it may sound as if these columns simply *happen* – as if words readily flow from my pen (i.e., computer) mysteriously guided by someone or something other than myself. And, *presto*, a completed C.C. page! Of course that is not what I mean to imply. I don't give much credence to the Romantic notion of writers'/artists' "inspiration" (which was rampant during the 19th century). And any Christian writer, even while praying for wisdom and guidance, and expecting those prayers to be answered, surely has to be careful about claiming inspiration from God, lest he or she start to believe that his or her words carry such a ring of truth as to be infallible; or at least, unchangeable. (Editors just love that kind of writer!)

As in all areas of life, God answers prayers for writing guidance in the way he sees fit, sometimes quickly, sometimes not.

Hide and seek... continued from p 17

And kids who consistently hear that they are loved by their parents learn to express affection for God and others.

Every day since our kids were born, my husband and I have told them that we love them. When she was two years old, our daughter Davita came to my husband and said, "Daddy, you're beautiful!" Then she turned to me and grinned, "You're beautiful, Mommy!" Even now when we communicate with our adult children, we freely say "I love you."

If you've never been vocal about your love for your kids, it's not too late to start. Write a card or e-mail, pick up the phone, or better yet do it in person, and say "I love

This month, though, I wondered whether he was listening. (Of course I know he was, and is. When we say that of God we usually mean that he isn't answering us in the way we think he should.) I don't often suffer from writer's block, but when it came to this particular column and what topic I'd choose, I was, as my deadline loomed, feeling brain-dead – mentally sluggish; "uninspired." If I'd had my druthers, God would have given me some new and startling insight into the topic I thought I was going to write about. Occasionally, if it serves his glory, he does lay astounding new insights virtually into our laps. More often I may serve him – and us – better if we struggle and work to uncover that kind of treasure not made with hands.

I assumed I was going to write something about the paradoxical relationship of God's sovereign control of all things to our human responsibility for our attitudes and actions. (Is tackling this profound subject hubris or stupidity?) Predestination and election are also part of this issue, as is the nature of providence, God's sending or allowing evil, and various other related thorny problems. God's sovereign rule versus human freedom occupied the Church Fathers, the Reformers and numerous other theologians and philosophers over the centuries. But I wasn't itching to re-argue this as a theological or philosophical debate (were I capable of doing so). I wanted to talk about it as a real, live issue, which it still is today.

Who's on first?

This subject is of immense importance because what we think and say about it reveals (or distorts) both our understanding of God and how we see ourselves in relation to God. Most Christians who have not been exposed to Calvinism's (biblical) emphasis on God's sovereignty, and even many who have, seem to have great difficulty really believing that God is lovingly, minutely present in all that happens in his world, good and bad. They can't reconcile God's unfolding of our lives and controlling of events in the world with our human "free will" to make our own decisions; or God's

you." You'll be following the example of your heavenly Father, and you'll be blessing your kids immensely.

Once when two-year-old Davita was playing hide-and-seek with her dad, she became frightened because she couldn't find him. She enlisted the help of nine-year-old Tamara. When they found him, Tamara said, "I told you, Davita! Dad is so big you can find him anywhere."

God is so big that we can find him anywhere. If we seek him always, we will continue to grow into being Christlike. And our homes will be transformed into healthy hiding places that reflect God's glory and launch our kids into service-filled lives.

control with all the evidence of evil. So quite a few Christians I know believe that God governs the world only in a general way but does not moment-by-moment uphold and direct all things he has made (as Scriptures makes clear). If God really both foreknew and planned what will unfold, they say, he would both be causing all kinds of tragedy (which a good God wouldn't or couldn't do) and he would be interfering with our choices – and God can't or won't act in our lives, or even save us, unless we want and ask him to.

Why do they come to those conclusions? Because their objections seem logical; and more compassionate than Calvinists quoting "Then the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" or "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated." But logic, or even presumed compassion, is not the fulcrum on which these issues rest. The fulcrum is God's revelation of himself. A failure to steep oneself in God's Word makes for a failure to know God as he reveals himself there, and for a failure to know our own true natures (and what he expects of us).

I might add, though, that the Bible is a dangerous book, a two-edged sword. I suspect that more and deeper reading of it may actually agitate rather than console some of those Christians who don't want to give God total control, and the more so non-Christians who are appalled at all its evidence of God's jealous righteousness. I know a couple of agnostics who say they actively rejected God after reading the Bible. (They somehow overlooked the ample evidence of God's great mercy and love.)

Divinum mysterium

I had intended to write about this issue because I gravitate toward issues that disturb me, that I feel need addressing. And I find it disturbing when *Christians* try to solve a perceived "problem with God" not by going to him and his Word (even many unbelievers do that), but by trying to change his nature and character so that it lines up with their conceptions. Such a compromise does not allow God to be the only God who was, is and is to come.

We need to recognize that there is no reason-based answer to the divine sovereignty/human free-agency dilemma; or to the question of why God allows the Prince of this World (as Jesus calls Satan on more than one occasion) to wreak the specific kind of havoc he wreaks, and I think we shouldn't bother to look for one any longer. How these things connect is simply a mystery, utterly unexplainable by or to our human minds. The privilege of knowing God, through Christ's finished work, does not entail understanding his mind and actions. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways," declares the LORD in Isaiah 55:8.

In this I think it may help to adopt something of the mind-set of our Orthodox

and Roman brothers and sisters in Christ, who are more apt to accept faith-related mysteries than we "rational" Reformationalists are. The answer to such questions is to read and believe everything God says about himself in Scripture (however perplexing some of it is) and, simultaneously, to accept everything he tells us about ourselves (however uncomfortable some of it makes us); and then to admit that we still see through a glass darkly.

Well, there! I guess I *have* written about God's sovereignty after all. But not in the way I had envisioned. Perhaps my all-afternoon listening to Bach's cantatas while writing this had its effect: 11 of them, written for the Easter season. Bach's music is always spiritually calming, even when it is full of trumpets-and-drums exuberance. Each of his 200 or so extant church cantatas is based on poetic versions and expansions of the Gospel lesson for a particular Sunday in Bach's Lutheran congregation. Though Bach didn't write his own cantata texts, his clear and deep understanding of Scripture (he owned a much studied and self-annotated three-volume set of Luther's translation and commentary on the Bible), combined with his lavishly one-of-a-kind musical gift, resulted in musical settings of the scriptural lessons which reflect the biblical meanings in profound and often unexpected ways. This knack earned him the appellation "The Fifth Evangelist" (possibly dubbed by the famous late 19th/early 20th century missionary-doctor Albert Schweitzer). I can't say I'd argue with that moniker. I'm not suggesting, of course, that Bach was "inspired" in the way the four Gospel writers were (and certainly not in the way the Romantics claimed to be). But he has surely been – and still is, through his music – an evangelist in his own right.

So I'll leave you this month with a poetic stanza that Bach set to music in Cantata No. 134 (Ein Herz, das seinen Jesum lebend weiss"). Its message, translated from the German into not-very-poetic English, is, nevertheless, not irrelevant to what I've just written. I only regret you can't hear the music:

*The Savior lives and conquers with might
For your salvation.*

*Because of His reputation
Satan must now tremble fearsomely
And hell itself must quiver.*

*The Savior dies for your good
And goes before you into hell,
He even spills his precious blood,
That you may win the victory in his blood,
For this can slay the enemy,
And, should the battle surround your soul,
Ensures that you do not lie vanquished.*

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY; she may be contacted via e-mail at <mvantil@adelphia.net>.

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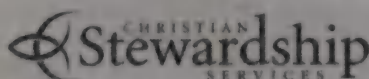
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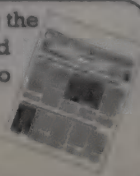


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Classifieds

Classifieds		Anniversaries	
<p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION CC is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date. RATE: (GST added to rates listed) All personal and family announcements: \$6.00 per sq. in. rose@christiancourier.ca Advertising - businesses and organizations: \$8.00 per sq. in. ads@christiancourier.ca</p>		<p>Anniversaries</p>	
<p>Wedding</p> <p>With thankfulness to God, Bob & Yvonne DeVries of London and John & Margaret Zylstra of St. Thomas announce the forthcoming marriage of their children:</p> <p>Leanne DeVries and Derek Zylstra</p> <p>The wedding will take place on Saturday, June 10, 2006 D.V. @ 2:00 p.m. First Christian Reformed Church, St. Thomas</p>		<p>1956 June 8 2006</p> <p>With praise and thanksgiving to God for his faithfulness, we announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of BEN AND TINA HUBERTS (nee Tolma)</p> <p>Psalms 121 ...The LORD will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.</p> <p>With love from: Bill & Cheryl Fran Harry & Bernadette Ed & Peggy grandchildren & great-grandchildren</p> <p>Open House will be held at Drayton Christian Reformed Church on June 10, 2006 from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Best Wishes only!</p> <p>Home address: RR#3 Moorefield ON N0G 2K0</p> 	
<p>Birthdays</p> <p>May 26, 2006</p> <p>My whole being, praise the LORD and forget not all his loving kindness. Psalms 103:2</p> <p>Happy 80th Birthday to Marie (Rie) Heeringa nee ten Hoor-Stonehouse</p> <p>With love and thanksgiving to God, we wish our dear Oma our LORD's continued blessings.</p> <p>From your husband Jan, children and grandchildren.</p> <p>Address: 12 Bartlett Ave Guelph ON L3M 4N5</p> 		<p>Clinton, June 15, 1956 Port Hope, June 15, 2006</p> <p>Ps #121</p> <p>50th Wedding Anniversary of CLARENCE AND JENNY HAALSTRA</p> <p>The families of: Michael & Sharon Haalstra Jeanette & Ed Symons Wilma & Brad Gauvreau</p> <p>Would like to thank the LORD for 50 years of marriage. The LORD has richly blessed them and we would like you to celebrate with us at an Open House on June 17, 2006 from 2-4 p.m. at Grace Christian Reformed Church 440 King Street East, Cobourg ON</p> <p>Mailing address: Mr. & Mrs. C Haalstra 2 Ward Street, Port Hope ON L1A 1L3</p>	
		<p>We, the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of LEO AND TENA BATTERINK are pleased to announce their 60th Wedding Anniversary on June 14, 2006. We thank God for his faithfulness and goodness!</p> <p>Ed & Mary Faber, Strathroy, ON Heather & Tim Graves, Richmond Hill, ON Mitchell, Dana, and Kendra Tim & Leanne, Scarborough, ON Ryan & Jody, Pella IA Evan and Graeme Jon & Jill, Toronto, ON Annette Westra, Strathroy, ON Ien, Strathroy, ON Leona, Calgary, AB</p> <p>Len & Nienke, Rocky Mountain House, AB Marie & Matthew Klaponski, Vancouver, BC Jacob Jen, Vancouver, BC Josh, Victoria, BC Kristin, Rocky Mountain House, AB Clarence & Jeni, Hamilton, ON Melanie, Barrie, ON Kyle, Hamilton, ON</p> <p>An Open House will be held at Trillium Village 400 Dominion St. Strathroy, Ontario on Wednesday, June 14, 2006 from 2 - 4 p.m. Address: #153 - 400 Dominion Street, Strathroy ON N7G 3G3</p>	
<p>I, NICK CORNELIUS OVERDUIN AM TURNING 50 YEARS OLD!!!</p> <p>I HAVE DECIDED TO THROW AN OPEN HOUSE PARTY, SINCE THIS GREAT MILESTONE WILL HAPPEN ONLY ONCE IN MY LIFETIME!</p> <p>Date: Saturday, June 24, 2006</p> <p>Location: Brampton Second Christian Reformed Church, at the north-east corner of Steeles and McLaughlin in Brampton, Ontario.</p> <p>Time: Drop in and out anytime between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>#####</p> <p>GIFTS?</p> <p>If you would like to bring a gift, please bring anything that is related to Canadian stamps or Canadian postal history. Old stamps, used stamps, new stamps, single stamps, many stamps, first-day covers, old Canadian envelopes, old stampless covers, etc.</p> <p>I thought my 50th would be a neat opportunity to further my latest hobby.</p> <p>I would also be delighted if you, instead, donated to your favorite charity. (If you donate to charity, you don't need to tell me which one or how much. I sincerely re- spect you for your decision and am thrilled to become the occasion for your donation.)</p> <p>My message to everyone:</p> <p>I will be devastated if you don't come. Please say yes!</p> <p>p.s. To help me plan properly, please rsvp by Friday, June 9, to a special email address I have created especially, just for this purpose only, namely, nickoverduin50@yahoo.ca</p>		<p>Clinton 1956 June 3 Blyth 2006</p> <p>JIM AND HINKE BAKELAAR (Bruinsma) hope to celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary together with their family:</p> <p>Mary & Pete Slotegraaf, Listowel Joanne & Herb VanAmersfoort, Blyth Donald & Bonnie Bakelaar, Listowel Cathi & Al Korvemaker, Forest Calvin & Cheryl Bakelaar, Auburn Veronica & Ralph de Vries, Cottam</p> <p>We are thankful for God's goodness.</p>   <p>Home address: Box 367 Blyth ON N0M 1H0</p>	

Classifieds

Anniversaries

VandenHeuvel



This Year, Kase & Annie VandenHeuvel celebrate their 55th Wedding Anniversary and their 80th Birthdays. Come and join us for an Open House on June 10, 2006 between 1 - 4 p.m. on the lawns of Kase & Annie's home at R.R. #2, Goderich (5 km. south of Hwy 21, east side of the road). Best Wishes only please.

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MAX AND GE HOFSTRA

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Andy Braak - Anthony, Matthew, Amanda, Michelle
John & Caroline Hofstra
Devon, Cayley, Logan, Seth Dolman

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Obituaries

ANNIGIJE (Ann) LOOYENGA

February 2, 1924 - April 2, 2006
Ann Looyenga was called home to be with her LORD on Sunday, April 2, 2006

Loving wife of Bob for more than 48 years.
Much loved mother of Catherine & David Harrison, Peter Looyenga, Hilary & Melvin Elzinga, Sharon & Will vanDokkumburg, Edward & Alicia Looyenga, Robert Lee Looyenga and Louise and Grandmother of Krista, Lauren, Jesse, Danielle, James, Gideon, Ethan, Joshua, David, Tobin, Isaac. Also survived by brother Eltje (Akke) and sister Jantje and sister-in-law Klaske of the Netherlands and brother-in-law John.

The funeral service was in Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton.
In lieu of flowers, donations to the Calvin Christian School would be appreciated by the family.

Psalm 90

Words to live by: Happy moments - praise God, difficult moments - seek God, quiet moments - worship God, painful moments - trust God, every moment - thank God.

Correspondence: Mr. B. Looyenga
135 - 261 Stone Church Rd
Hamilton ON L9B 2X3

ELLEN VAN TIL-VAN HARMELEN

went to be with her LORD and Savior on Good Friday morning after a courageous battle with cancer. She was in her sixty-seventh year.

Ellen was a faithful member of the Bethel Christian Reformed Church and a dedicated and wise elder of Church Council. She will be sadly missed by her husband John, their children, grandchildren and members of the church. One of her favorite chapters in the Bible was Joshua 1.

On behalf of Church Council and members of Bethel Christian Reformed Church, London Ont

Correspondence address: Pastor John van Til
1636 Borden St London N5W 2V9.
e-mail johnvantil@rogers.com

Bless the LORD O my soul
and forget not all his benefits . . .

Psalm 103:2

At faith Manor, Brampton, Ontario
the LORD took to be with him in glory his child

GRADA BERENDINA (Dina) HENGVELD (nee Geurink)

January 30, 1910 - May 4, 2006

Beloved wife of the late Hendrik Hengeveld

Dear mother and Opoe of
Wim Hengeveld & wife Grace (deceased) - Ian
Bernard & Lucy Hengeveld

Ryan & Sue, Diana, Martin & Anne
John & Heang Hengeveld - Henry, Ken, Sarah
Ada & Jacob Zekveld - Tony & Arley, Henry & Annette,
Harry & Evelyn, Dianne & Jeff Friesen, John & Maxine,
Richard & Nancy, Karen & Brian Zegers, Gary
Henry & Jane Hengeveld
Chris & Sonya, Mike & Rachel, Rob & Marcia, Dave
Hermien Hengeveld

Also a dear great-Opoe to 32 great-grandchildren & 1 deceased
Survived by one sister-in-law
Dora Hengeveld (nee Pennings) in the Netherlands.

The funeral was held in the Christian Reformed Church
in Lindsay on Tuesday May 9, 2006
with three of her grandchildren officiating.

Correspondence: Ada Zekveld, 4448 Michigan Line RR#1
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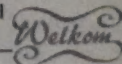
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Please send letter and resume to: **Covenant CRC, Attn: Search Committee**
410 Lansdowne Ave. Woodstock ON N4S 1J2
or email to: **woodcovadmin@bellnet.ca**

Job Opportunities

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THE LIGHTHOUSE CHRISTIAN CENTRE

The Lighthouse ministry is a multicultural Christian Community Centre in downtown Toronto, with the mission to show God's love in action to the new immigrant, the refugee, and the poor.

The Lighthouse invites applications for the position of Executive Director. Applicants should have strong management skills, including leadership, team building, public relations, finance, and fund-raising abilities. Related experience in social work will be an asset. A job description is available through ben@lighthousecentre.ca

If you seek to serve Jesus Christ in an outreach ministry, please mail your application, including covering letter and resume, to:

Peter Jagt, Secretary of The Board
154 Cottonwood Drive
Don Mills ON M3C 2B4

Christian Senior Citizens Home of Chatham Operating South Chatham Village Apartments

invites applications for the position of
Live-in Superintendent

Due to a retirement, South Chatham Village has an opening for a Live-in Superintendent. Starting date to be Aug 1/06. Interested parties are invited to mail their application, along with resume and references to:

Board of Directors
Christian Senior Citizens Home of Chatham
310-40 Elm Street
Chatham ON N7M 6A5

Additional information will be provided after initial contact, or can be found on www.40elm.com
E-mail address: scv40elm@gmail.com



PARENT PROFESSIONALS

Mutual Support Systems of the Niagara Region, a non-profit agency providing residential care and treatment for children invites applications for the position of House Parents. An ideal career choice for a married couple to work together in meaningful ministry, these are full-time, salaried, live-in positions for both partners. Our House Parents are the heart and soul of the Mutual Support program. See our web site for more program information.

Please contact: **Randy Klassen**
Associate Director-Human Resources
792 Canboro Rd. Fenwick ON L0S 1C0
Tel: 905 892 4332
rklassen@mutualsupport.net
www.mutualsupport.net

IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL, LETHBRIDGE, AB.

requires a band/choir teacher at the junior and senior high level. This position would also include band at the grade 5/6 level at our elementary campus.

has a possible opening for a senior high math teacher

has a possible opening for a junior high English/social studies teacher

Please forward a resume including a statement of faith, and a summary of your Christian educational philosophy to:

Ed DeYoung, Principal,
Immanuel Christian High School
802 - 6th Ave. N, Lethbridge AB T1H 0S1
Phone: 403-328-4783 Fax: 403-327-6333
email: ed.deyoung@gmail.com

HOPE DROP-IN CENTRE, a 15 year-old Christian Ministry, in Brampton, Ontario needs a new COORDINATOR.

We are seeking:

1. A committed evangelical Christian;
2. A person with good organization skills;
3. A person with leadership and vision skills;
4. A person with public relations skills (visiting churches for example);
5. A self starter;
6. A team player.

Your responsibility will be to be the public administrative and management face of the Hope Centre reporting to the Board of Directors, will manage the staff and volunteers, provide training, be willing to witness to the gospel and help others do so, and help us grow. You will spend between 15 and 30 hours on the business of the Hope Centre, including spending time in the Hope Centre with staff, volunteers, and the visitors, meetings, and other work as you may feel needed, or as directed by the board. This is a volunteer position though we are willing to consider a self-funded position through fundraising.

Email your interest (and resume or other details) to
John_Van_Egmond@egmondassociates.com

You can mail us at **Coordinator Search Committee**

Hope Drop In Centre
160 Main St South Unit 25A
Brampton ON L6W 2E1
Phone: 905-790-2273

STOUFFVILLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is inviting applications for a
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Consider joining this small but passionate school that seeks to offer Christ-centered education.

Contact Jake Vriend @
scsjake@bellnet.ca
or call 905-640-3297.



The Board of Directors of the Ontario Christian School Teachers Association (OCSTA) invites applications for the position of

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director's responsibilities are to implement the aims and objectives of OCSTA, which are:

- to promote and to improve Christian education in Ontario
- to foster a high standard of ethics for its members
- to promote a high standard of professional training and conduct
- to strive for a worthy socio-economic position for its members

The Executive Director is expected to articulate a Christian perspective which is current and focused on the place and service of OCSTA members in their workplaces and in the greater community by means of various promotion opportunities as they occur or are created.

A successful candidate has:

- a commitment to Jesus as Lord and Saviour
- a range of teaching/administrative experience in Christian education
- integrity in leading and learning
- strong people skills

Interested persons should forward their applications (C.V., including complete references from three sources) to:

OCSTA Executive Director Search Committee
777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 or at
edsearchcommittee@ocsta.org

For more information regarding the position, contact Hilda Roukema at 905.648.1200 or hroukema@ocsta.org

Applications for the position will be received until November 1, 2006. Interviews will be held in January 2007. Duties to commence August 1, 2007.

See our website: www.christiancourier.ca and click on job opportunities for want ads recently run in the Christian Courier.

Director of Training Required



Christian Labour Association of Canada is looking for a Director of Training. This is a full time position located in Edmonton Alberta.

We are looking for a mature individual who is able to work within a team environment with a deep desire to provide innovative leadership in the training of our members in Edmonton, Calgary and Fort McMurray. The successful candidate will give direction to a staff of six persons, administer a two million dollar annual budget and develop visionary programs in conjunction with participating companies.

He/she will be expected to hold to and communicate clearly the philosophy of the union - a values-based organization emphasizing integrity, fairness respect and dignity. CLAC believes in a partnership model that balances strong and effective worker advocacy with the long-term interests of the work community.

An adult educational background is preferred but not required. Good communication skills and organizational abilities are essential.

Salary commensurate with experience. CLAC offers excellent benefit and pension programs.

For further information and a job description contact Co Vanderlaan, National Representative at (780) 454-6181 or email your resume to cvanderlaan@clac.ca

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 3 Calvin Christian School, **Drayton, ON**, is Celebrating 50 years of Christian Education! Celebrate with us! Open House at the school noon until 5 p.m. Evening program at 7:30 p.m. at the Drayton CRC. For details phone 519 638 2935 or go to website: www.calvchri.org

June 5-9 Annual Milk & Honey summer festival at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster, ON**. "A Vacation with a Christian Perspective" See ad for details

June 10 Retirement celebration for Aneta Zondervan and Keith Groen, 7 pm, Chatham Christian School. See ad this issue for details.

June 14 Hollandse Dag, 10 a.m. at 310 Kingscourt Ave., **Kingston, Ont.** Speaker: Mr James Kooistra. For information, contact E. Hiddema at 613-546-5615

June 14 Hollandse Day, **Moorefield, Ont.** Community Centre, 10 a.m. See ad for details.

Oct 27-29 **Hamilton** District Christian High School 50th anniversary weekend. For information about activities or to register as alumni: www.hdch.org or 905.648.6655

"A Vacation with a Christian Perspective"

The annual **Milk & Honey Summer Festival** at Redeemer University College will be held **June 5-9, 2006**.

This unique vacation offers a week of relaxation as well as cultural and spiritual stimulation. Highlights include guided tours, banquets, informative lectures, fellowship and entertainment. Join Dr Benita Wolters-Fredlund and Ms Helen Vreugdenhil as they explore the theme "Hallelujahs around the World: Christian music through the ages."

For more information or to register, call 905-648-2139 ext. 4211.

The **Hamilton Children's Choir** will perform on Monday evening, June 5, 06. If you are interested in attending this performance, please contact the box office at 905-648-2139 ext. 4211.

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Retirement Celebration

Sarnia Christian School

Invites you to a Retirement
Celebration for

Pete Weening

on

Saturday, June 3, 2006

@ 7:00 p.m.

in the school gymnasium

Alumni, students, faculty and members are invited to
celebrate Pete's **40 years** of service
to Christian Education.

If you wish to contribute in any way to this
celebration, please contact Mettha Deelstra at
deelstra@xcelco.on.ca

HOLLANDSE
DAG

June 14 10 a.m.
310 Kingscourt Ave.,
Kingston, Ontario
The speaker will be
Mr. James Kooistra.
For more information,
call E. Hiddema at
613-546-5615

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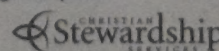


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Hamilton District Christian High School
50th anniversary weekend
October 27-29

For information about activities or to register:
www.hdch.org or 905.648.6655



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News

Europeans at a loss when it comes to elections

Peter Ford

PARIS – If the US electorate is split almost evenly between “red” and “blue” voters, the European political picture might be drawn from a more muted palette. But pink or mauve, European voters are also riven into nearly matching camps, recent elections suggest.



Romano Prodi

The former premier of Italy Silvio Berlusconi had hoped for two weeks somehow to salvage something out of the elections, angrily contesting the wafer-thin margin by which he lost. The voters certainly did not give the victor Romano Prodi a resounding mandate.

In their indecision, however, Italians reflected a confusion that has gripped electorates in other major European nations, plunging the continent into uncertainty about its direction at a time when rising economies elsewhere in the world are threatening its economic prosperity and political clout.

Last Fall, German voters' inability to choose a clear winner forced Angela Merkel to bring opposition Social Democrats into her coalition government. The front-runners in French presidential elections due next year are neck and neck. Pollsters cannot call the results of the Swedish parliamentary elections to be held next September as the margin of difference is within the margin of error.

“You could speak of a crisis of the democratic model,” worries Dominique Moisi, an analyst at the French Institute of International Relations, a think tank in Paris. “People are disillusioned with politics, disappointed in whichever government they’ve got, and generally disenchanted with democracy.”

At the same time, the election and opinion-poll results suggest that Europeans simply don't know what they want when it comes to the key economic reforms that their leaders say are necessary if Europe is to break out of its vicious circle of low growth and high unemployment.

“Europeans want change but they are scared of it. They realize the status quo is unsustainable, but they are frightened that reforms will hurt them,” says Mark Leonard, a former foreign policy adviser to British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

That has led voters to deliver some highly ambiguous verdicts in recent elections.

In early April, Mr. Prodi led a nine-party alliance to victory over Mr. Berlusconi's coalition by the slimmest of margins – ahead by just 25,000 votes out of 38 million cast.

In Germany, during the final days of the campaign, the Social Democrats clawed their way back to a position of sufficient strength to force Ms. Merkel to include them in her government.

In both countries, the mainstream parties contesting power from the center-right and center-left found themselves fighting over the middle ground. They were scrambling for the support of voters divided less by the clear ideological differences that have split the US electorate down the middle than by muddled indecision.

In Italy, Berlusconi won office five years ago on promises of reform, pledging to modernize the Italian

economy with changes to the welfare system and the labor market. His failure to make good on those pledges, and the sluggish performance of the Italian economy, disappointed many voters. Prodi offered a new approach, but without threatening a radical break with the past.

In Germany, it was the Social Democratic government's efforts – however cautious – to cut unemployment benefits and to liberalize labor laws, that lost Chancellor Gerhard Schröder much of his support, along with record unemployment. Merkel's image as a root-and-branch reformer was a liability: Last-minute worries that she might be another Margaret Thatcher pushed voters away from her in droves.

That experience appears to have taught a lesson to Nicolas Sarkozy, the French conservative expected to lead the right into presidential battle next April. While branding himself the candidate of “rupture” with his country's stagnant status quo, he carefully distanced himself from his government's failed efforts last month to reform French labor law.

Some observers blame this sort of ambiguity in Europe's leaders for its citizens' uncertainty about which of them to elect.

“Everybody knows there has to be change, but none of the political parties are courageous enough to describe a possible future,” says Wolfgang Nowak, an economist with Deutsche Bank's International Forum. “People know change is needed, but leaders have to explain where we are going. Nobody wants to move if they move blindfolded.”

With the short-term losers from welfare or labor reforms more easily identifiable, and more vocal, than the potential long-term winners, governments have been reluctant to take the electoral risk that reform represents.



Angela Merkel and Gerhard Schröder

“They are often not willing to ride roughshod over people's fears,” says Mr. Leonard.

“But at the same time, few major parties in Europe run on a platform of simply maintaining the status quo. So there is an underlying similarity of approaches between the left and the right: Different parties just play different mood music about how the reform should be done,” he says.

Sometimes, though, the music drowns out the message, says Mr. Moisi, leaving voters without any clear vision to inspire them. “People don't ask themselves who they are for, but who they are least against,” he argues. “It is democratic confusion, and loss of morale, which is very important.”

News shorts

Better ageing

I subscribe to online “The Positive Ageing Newsletter” by Kenneth and Mary Gergen. It is always packed full of solid advice. Of course, I'm not at the point where I need it yet, but I thought I'd start collecting information early in case I'll be too forgetful later on. My wife and I are always cracking jokes about getting older and losing something. That's part of the problem, say the Gergens, drawing on a recent study: we see ageing wholly in terms of loss and decline.

We keep monitoring ourselves: Is my memory still ok? Can I still think clearly? Have I lost my stamina? Am I still attractive?

“We begin to construct a world in which problems are central,” warn the Gergens. “To ask about our failings is to create a world in which failing is focal.”

Instead, they urge us to focus on such questions as: What is working? What gives life to the relationship? How does the way we relate increase our success?

It doesn't always work, though. I've developed a ringing in my ears, but no matter how much I try telling myself that I'm more attuned to “the music of the spheres,” I prefer a more varied orchestral sound.

Money and happiness

Another study to disillusion us. My parents used to tell me that money can't buy happiness. When we biked through a ritzy neighborhood of fancy houses, we'd imagine them filled with miserable kids – unhappy because they had too much of everything. Well, we'd try to imagine them that way, but it was always a stretch.

Now comes this from Statistics Canada: “The higher the family income, the higher the children almost always fly in terms of their physical, cognitive, social and emotional well-being.”

According to one of the researchers: “If the family income goes up, then the child's health goes up as well.” And there's no ceiling: the more money, the greater the well-being.

But keep reading. Toward the end the report does say that the connection between wealth and well-being is weakest at the level of “social and emotional well-being.” In other words, a rich kid may not actually feel the advantages of his greater well-being. So maybe our parents were right after all.

You wonder whether the researchers had a happiness thermometer. Maybe what they ended up measuring was the obvious – that the rich have more of everything that money can buy. And those with money still get better healthcare and better education, even in Canada.

Alcohol? Keep it small

Been taking a few snorts every evening because they say it's good for you? Red wine was even said to be good for your heart. Not so, according to another killjoy study. In fact, this one looked at 54 different studies from around the globe. Conducted between 1974 and 2004, they link how much people drink with the risk of premature death from all causes, including heart disease. Previous studies, they said had erred: they had included among “abstainers” or non-drinkers that group of people who had been forced to quit drinking due to ill health. That had tipped the statistics in favor of moderate drinkers.

The good news is that a little drink probably won't do you any harm. But a little drink, says the doctor, means little – 5 oz.

Maybe you're better off switching to tea. Research has linked tea to a reduced risk of breast, lung, oral and skin cancers – and it may even help against Alzheimer's. And you can swill as much of it as you want.

Of course, you may be getting up more often in the middle of the night.